Dungeon®

ADVENTURES FOR TSR ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

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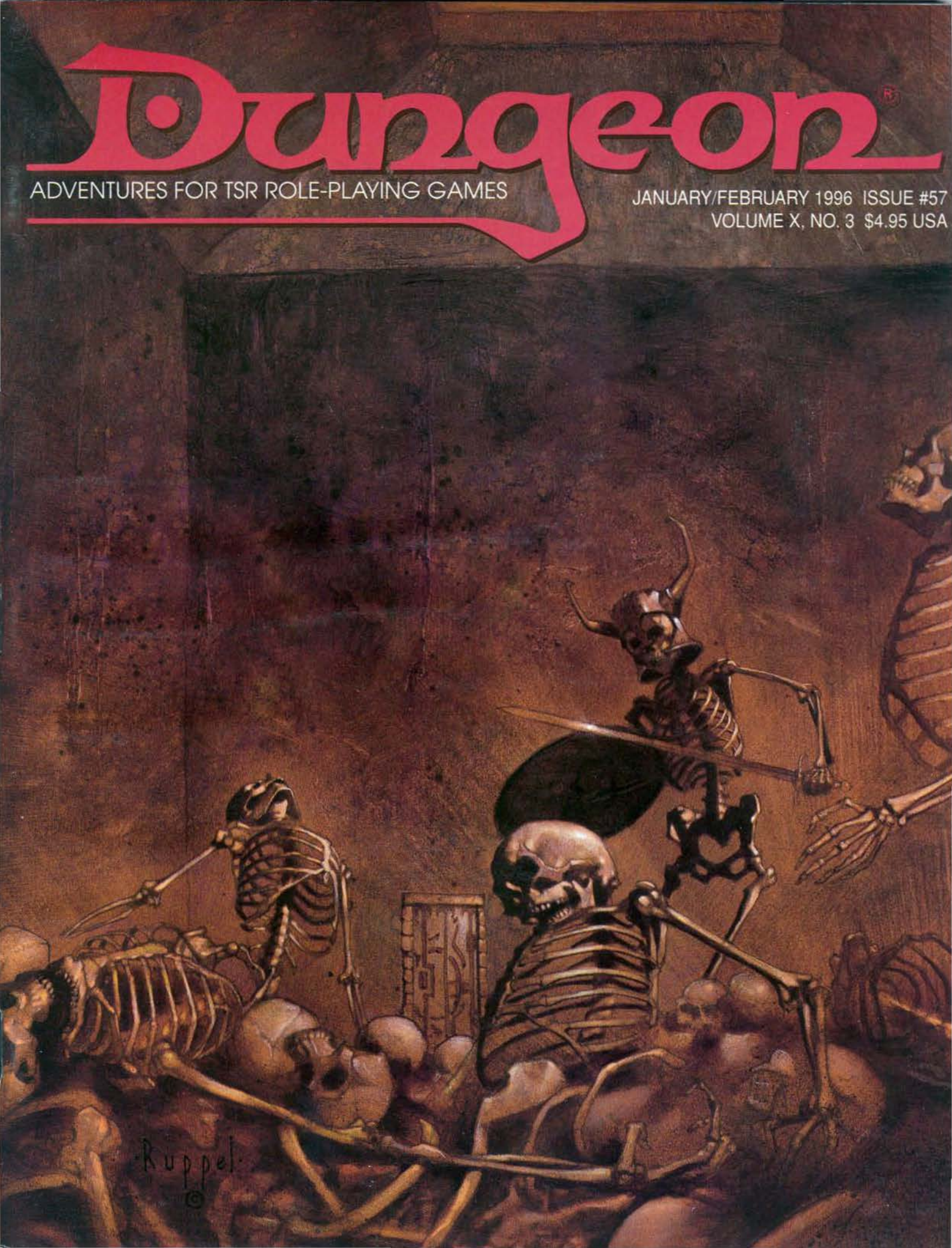

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Oki Hyobu Norikiyo
A company commander of the Nabeshima clan
1568–1651

TO CURE A KINGDOM

BY JOHN A. HARTSHORNE

A prescription for evil

Artwork by David Day

John writes: "I have been playing the AD&D® game for 15 years and have wanted to submit an adventure to DUNGEON® Adventures for quite some time. I'm a graduate student working on my Master's Degree in Chemistry at Ohio State University. My wife, Jessica, contributed to this scenario by tossing around plot lines with me. We also live with two cats, who did nothing to help with this adventure."

"To Cure a Kingdom" is an AD&D adventure designed for a party of 5–8 PCs of levels 5–8 (approximately 45 total levels). This adventure uses rules from *The Complete Psionics Handbook*, and—though not required—psionic PCs can make the adventure more interesting. If the DM chooses not to use psionics, equivalent spell-like powers may be substituted for the main antagonist's psionic abilities. A mix of character types is best for this scenario, including at least one priest or paladin (rangers and druids are also helpful). If no priest or paladin is available, the PCs need some method to *cure disease* to have a good chance of survival.

The adventure is set in a warm coastal region near a vast swamp. The PCs must travel from a nearby city to a temple within the swamp. The DM may easily incorporate this adventure into an ongoing campaign by substituting any major city within a reasonable distance of a large swamp. The adventure begins at the capital city of a small country. The PCs have been summoned by the king, who wishes them to undertake a mission.

Adventure Background

Though many have made excursions into the vast subterranean regions known as the Underdark, relatively little is known about most of the races living there. Only a few years ago, a member of one of the more evil races, the illithids (mind flayers), attained a position of what many other races might call "political power" (though the term is unknown to the illithids *per se*). Preaching to the others of its kind, one rogue illithid claimed to have a great plan in order that would allow the mind flayer race to rule the entire Underdark. It gained a large following and attempted to overthrow the current leadership in one of the great cities far below the surface.

In the illithid civil war that followed, the rebel visionary was finally captured, and the uprising was quelled. Despite their cruelty, the illithids had no form of execution as a punishment for one of their own. Because they viewed all other races as vastly inferior—cattle upon which to feed—the greatest punishment that the collective ruling body could create was exile into the world of these lesser creatures. Since the primary form of transportation for the illithids is their innate psychoportation ability (*astral projection*, *probability travel*, *teleport*, etc.) the ruling body performed *psychic surgery* upon their captive, destroying its ability to use that part of its mind which controls the discipline of psychoportation.

The visionary was ejected from the community and sent to wander the tunnels and caverns of the Underdark alone. It discovered that the maiming of its mind had destroyed its ability to transport itself, but that it had opened other parts which were previously closed (which accounts for its expanded psionic ability). The creature searched endlessly, both in the Underdark and on the surface, for the method to restore its psychoportative powers and return home. There it would exact vengeance on those who exiled it before leading its people to victory over all other races.

On the Surface World

A great many years ago, the Kingdom of Haranlarché, which lies on the coast, received a gift from the kingdom's master wizard and a druid. In a display of cooperation and friendship between the powers of nature and the arcane, the two spellcasters created a pair of magical trees called *Ylansidorin* trees. The trees were willows with streaks of silver in their otherwise ordinary bark. Their leaves were a pale green tipped with gold, and in the spring, the trees blossomed in vibrant red and yellow. One *Ylansidorin* tree was planted in the inner courtyard of Kovrent, the capital city, the other in the courtyard of one of the cities near the country's border.

The *Ylansidorin* trees allowed instantaneous travel between the two cities, which were many days apart on the fastest horse. Messages could be transported with no danger to the courier, and the kingdom was easily defended against outside invasion. The royal family was ecstatic with the gift, as were the people of the realm. Many wards were placed around the trees, both magical and mundane, since capture of one tree would allow access to the interior of the sister city.

The exiled illithid (who has no name, as those of the illithid race recognize each other by mental signature) wandered for a few years on the surface world, avoiding as many sentient beings as possible unless driven by hunger.

Eventually, the illithid captured a traveling alchemist. After learning his profession, the illithid controlled the hapless fellow, forcing him to develop a cure for the mind flayer's ailing mental powers. The alchemist was successful, but the cure required the use of four leaves from the magical trees of Haranlarché. The mind flayer learned of the locations of the *Ylansidorin* trees and of their rumored wards from other travelers it had caught.

The creature captured and sent (under mental control) three different humans to steal the required leaves. After all three failed, the illithid decided that a more subtle method was required to obtain the ingredients (which suited the mind flayer just fine, since illithids are masters of scheming). It traveled south of Kovrent to the vast swamp where it had previously encountered a temple of Maalpherus, the dark god of disease and plague.

The illithid easily cowed the temple's guards and priests with its psionic powers, convincing them that it was indeed the avatar of their god. The newly proclaimed "god" took up residence in the lower levels of the temple, away from the light of day, eventually discovering the gate to an extraplanar region. Using the resources of its new priests, the illithid developed a virulent disease that could be cured only by using the same rare mushroom which was used to create it. The mind flayer caused much of Kovrent to fall ill, including members of the royal family. A messenger was dispatched to the city offering a cure in return for control of the kingdom's shipping lanes.

The illithid knew that the demands of the temple were unreasonable and that the king would refuse them. The messenger was instructed to tell the monarch exactly what ingredients the remedy must contain. One of these ingredients was the rare mushroom which can be found only at the temple. Another ingredient of the cure was four *Ylansidorin* leaves. The messenger told the king that the cure must be mixed at the temple, for the mushroom would lose its healing properties unless mixed with the other ingredients within a few minutes of being picked. The illithid hoped the king would send a group of people to steal the mushroom. This group would have to bring the healing potion (and consequently the leaves from the tree) to the temple to mix the remedy. This would allow the mind flayer to obtain the leaves it desires for its own cure.

Beginning the Adventure

The adventure begins with the PCs entering the grand reception hall in the palace of Kovrent for an audience with King Leograth, Monarch of the Trees (an honorific title referring to the magical gift given years ago).

> You await the king in the reception hall of the palace of Kovrent, the capital of the Kingdom of Haranlarché. The large room seems larger still because of the absence of the normal court, and only a half dozen guards stand at attention around the perimeter of the room. Your journey through the city allowed you ample view of the troubles that King Leograth faces. The populace of the city is under a type of siege. Though not everyone you passed looked deathly ill, not a single person seemed well.
>
> Suddenly, the door at the rear of the chamber slams open. A tall figure draped in robes strides into the hall. The gem-encrusted crown on his brow identifies him as the king. As he nears you can see that his features are drawn and haggard.
>
> "My friends, please allow us to speak as equals, for I have no time to deal with the formalities usually due the royal court. I am grateful that you answered my summons so quickly. As you have no doubt seen, the people of this city lie stricken by a plague. None of our healers or priests have had any success in curing this disease. Healing spells ease the pain of the afflicted for a few hours, but the disease returns. My son and only heir lies stricken, and I have watched him slip closer to death with every passing hour!"

"My advisors tell me this plague is a magical curse sent to us by design. Even now, a messenger from one of the temples of Maalpherus, the dark god of disease and plague, rests in one of my guest rooms. The motherless dog brings greetings from his high priest! They say that they will remove the plague if I agree to turn over all use of my waterways to their dark lord. I think it is needless to say that this demand is utterly preposterous! They are so arrogant that they have told me explicitly what this cure must contain. They say it was designed so that we could supply all but one ingredient, some sort of mushroom that they cultivate in the depths of their own temple!"

"I ask you to take the necessary ingredients to the temple and find this special mushroom. If you can mix this cure and return here with it, I will give you anything within my power as reward. My priests think it likely that we can magically duplicate the cure once we have a sample.

"I would let you speak to the messenger yourselves, but I fear he might suspect my plans. If you have any questions for him, then I will ask him myself and relate the answers. If not, then I will supply you with any provisions you need, as well as a map to the temple in the swamp to the south."

The PCs may ask the king to learn what the messenger knows about any subject. The messenger is very talkative and gives any of the following information:

- The location of the temple in the swamp, and that the mushroom is located in the lower level beneath the main temple
- That the outer temple consists of a manned wall much like a small keep, and that it is the only entrance
- That the temple leader is the High Priest of Maalpherus

The messenger does not willingly mention the fact that his "god" resides in the temple itself. While he was told by the illithid to give freely any of the above information, he was also warned in no uncertain terms not to mention the presence of "Maalpherus."

The king does not willingly allow the PCs to speak with the messenger, because he fears that his plan might somehow be discovered if the messenger meets with them. If the PCs go against the king's wishes and somehow find the messenger, they may interview him personally. The messenger is a 3rd-level priest who is unarmed (the DM may create statistics as needed). The PCs may discover any of the above information. Using *ESP* spells or the like reveals the presence of the priest's god (note that the priest truly believes that the mind flayer is the avatar of his god and does not know the creature's true identity, having seen him only when fully cloaked).

The king supplies the PCs with any (non-magical) supplies they require for the journey, a map that leads them to the approximate location of the temple of Maalpherus, and the potion that can heal his people (less its final component). If the PCs do not have a priest, the DM may wish to supply them with a few *potions of healing* and two or three samples of *Keoghtom's ointment*. The antidote for the disease will be brought by the kingdom's alchemist. Before the PCs leave on their journey, read the following:

The king has supplied you with everything you need for the journey. You now await the king's alchemist who will give you the valuable cure that you must complete.

"Greetings, friends!" says a robust voice behind you. You turn to see a stout man in robes approaching with a large metal flask. He reaches you and holds out the flask, gripped tightly in both hands.

"I am Shareth, His Majesty's Royal Alchemist. This is the cure of which he spoke." He slowly and carefully hands the flask over.

"This flask is very sturdy and has been sealed by wizardry. To remove the stopper, you must speak the words, 'For the Kingdom's health.' The flask is as protected as it can be, but please be careful! You will not be able to replace the contents once you have gone."

"The mushroom that you seek is pale white with streaks of red in the crown. When you find it, take five pinches from the crown and drop them into the flask. This should complete the cure. The cure contains some ordinary things such as roots and herbs of healing, and some rare things such as the powdered scale of a gold dragon. One component it contains is unique: four leaves from the Willows of Silver and Gold!" His smile droops slightly as he regards your blank expressions

"Do you not know of our magical *Ylansidorin* Trees?" he asks in perplexed tones. "Ah, but you are foreigners. I will explain."

"Years ago, a great wizard and druid worked together to grow the magical Trees of Haranlarché. They presented the trees to the kingdom as a gift and a show of support from the land and the powers of magic. One *Ylansidorin* Tree is here in the palace courtyard, and the other is in the courtyard of one of our border cities. These trees appear as ordinary willows with streaks of silver in the bark and gold in the leaves. They are no ordinary trees, though. One has but to touch the side of the tree and wish to be taken under the boughs of the other. Then, poof! It happens. You are transported instantaneously to the other side of the kingdom."

He sighs, a wistful look in his eyes. "I have not taken this journey, but I wish to someday, as I hear it is wonderful. Ah, the point is that you must be careful! Make haste, for the fate of our kingdom rests with you. The journey is long, so take care with that cure! If it is lost, you must return so we can prepare another. If that happens, we may have time to replace it, but perhaps not. May the gods guide you!"

The PCs may explore the capital city and stock up on any other supplies that they might require. There should only be a 20% normal chance of finding supplies in the city itself, however, as most of the stores and shops are closed. This is in large part because the proprietors have fallen ill.

The ship which carries the PCs down the coast to the city of Thyree leaves whenever they desire. The ship, called *Crone's Voyage*, is a large merchant ship that currently carries no goods or other passengers. The captain, Dherrich, and his crew remain aboard the ship for fear of contamination (though the

disease is not passed by air or touch). He has been paid well by the king to make this special voyage, but he requires some sort of identification from the PCs before allowing them to board his ship (the flask containing the cure will suffice).

The ship travels down the coast, taking eight days to reach the port of Thyree. Weather is sunny and warm, and the ship suffers no random encounters. Upon reaching Thyree, the captain of *Crone's Voyage* directs the PCs to the wharfmaster, who has a riverboat waiting for them. No one accompanies the PCs for the rest of the journey into the swamp.

The Port of Thyree

Thyree is a busy port of trade. The city is just slightly smaller than Kovrent and is centered around the military. There are two large war galleys anchored in the harbor, and the entire city is surrounded by a 20'-high wall. Guard towers are spaced every hundred yards along the north and east walls facing the open water. The walls facing inland and toward the swamp (south and west) have guard towers spaced every 200'. The only entrance to the city by land is a large reinforced gate facing due west. A road exits the city and continues up the coast to Kovrent. The other entrance is from the docks at the harbor.

The interior of the city is confusing, as the roads twist and turn. One cannot see in a straight line for more than 100' or so. There are many places for defenders of the city to lay ambushes for invaders. Guard houses are found throughout the city, and the place is very clean. Even the poor quarter of the city down by the harbor is fairly well kept. The palace of the Duke of Thyree is found in the center of the city surrounded by another wall with towers spaced about its perimeter.

Again, the PCs may spend as much time here as they wish. Supplies are readily obtainable, and information about the city, its history, or the Reaching Fens is easily found. Note that the general populace is unaware of the temple of Maalpherus. The PCs may even ask for an audience with the duke if they desire. The duke knows of their mission and has been instructed by the king to give any assistance for which they ask. He can offer very little information that the PCs do not already have. He (or anyone else asked within the city) readily details the problems that Thyree has had from the swamp. At least twice a year, the city is assaulted by a large force of lizard men sometimes accompanied by other creatures. The lizard men have never even come close to breaking the city's defenses, but the consistent attacks keep the guardsmen alert. The fens themselves seem to creep closer to the city walls every year (thus the name, "the Reaching Fens"). If the PCs' quest becomes public knowledge, citizens warn them of the lizard men and giant-kin who live within its boundaries. If he is spoken to, the duke also conveys this warning.

Into the Reaching Fens

The trip from Thyree to the mouth of the Teiren River takes approximately three and a half days, and the PCs may encounter groups of fishermen along the river before reaching the temple. The DM should also check for random encounters every two hours along the river. If the PCs pull up along the bank, the river region of the encounter tables should still be used unless they venture more than a

Wilderness Encounter Tables

Marsh Regions, River (roll 2d10)

2	Zombie (3–24)
3	Lizard, giant (2–5)
4	Ogre (2–8)
5	Lizard man (4–16)
6	Toad, giant (1–12)
7	Crocodile (3–24)
8	Leech, giant (4–16)
9	Snake, giant or normal (1–6)
10	Spider, large (2–20)
11	Ooze, crystal
12	Greenhag (1–2)
13	Leech, throat (1–6)
14	Lizard man (2–12)
15	Snake, giant or normal (1–6)
16	Pudding, brown
17	Shambling mound (1–3)
18	Spectre (1–4)
19	Basilisk, lesser (1–4)
20	Catoblepas

Marsh Regions, Land (roll 2d16)

2	Spirit Naga
3	Mudman (2–12)
4	Lycanthrope, wererat (3–18)
5	Will-O'-Wisp
6	Beetle, rhinoceros (1–4)
7	Troll (1–10)
8	Ogre (2–16)
9	Leech, giant (4–16)
10	Toad, giant (1–12)
11	Spider, giant (1–8)
12	Centipede, giant (2–24)

few hundred feet inland. In this case, the land region encounter table is used. When the PCs finally approach the location of the temple of Maalpherus, they must walk through the swamp. The land region wilderness encounter tables should be used at this point.

If the PCs insist, they may travel on foot through the entire swamp (at a rate of 8–10 miles per day), though this easily takes two to three times as long. Discourage this by having the people of Thyree recount stories of the dangers of the swamp to those traveling within. Encounters on foot occur three times as often, and the DM should create obstacles such as large pools of quicksand, water too deep to walk through, etc. Furthermore, the PCs must carry their food (difficult at best considering the distance) and water (fresh water is not to be found), and it is extremely unlikely that they find anywhere dry to sleep (the ground is spongy and damp at its driest). Trees offer a drier if uncomfortable rest. The whole trip should be made with wet feet and legs (if not entire body).

1. Ambush from the Bank. This event takes place toward dusk of the second day after the PCs enter the Teiren River (about 40 miles upriver). The river is still very wide (300–400′), and vegetation obscures sight 20′ beyond the bank. A large group of lizard men wait on both the north and south banks. The 20 lizard men on the south bank fire arrows at the passing riverboat. They hope to drive the PCs toward the north bank, where a group of 28 lizard men wait. One patrol leader on each bank coordinates the attacks. If the PCs ground their boat on the north bank, the lizard men there attack. If they merely keep toward the north side of the river but try to outrun the ambush, the lizard men on the north bank swim out to the boat to attack the PCs. If the PCs choose to attack the lizard men on the south bank, those on the north cross the river to aid in the combat (this takes eight rounds due to the strong current of the river).

The lizard men on the south bank are armed with short sword, shield, a long curved knife, and a short bow with 20 arrows. The vegetation offers an armor class bonus of –6 from return missile fire. Those on the north bank are armed with the same equipment but have no missile weapons.

Lizard men (48): INT low; AL N; AC 4; MV 6, swim 12; HD 2+1; hp 13; THAC0 19; #AT 1 or 3; Dmg by weapon type or 1–2/1–2/1–6; SZ M; ML 14; XP 65; *MM*/227.

Patrol leaders (2): Same as above except 17 hp each.

2. Snares from Above. This event occurs on the fifth day in the swamp after the PCs pass the first fork (they should be keeping to the north if they are following their map). The trees here are larger. In many places, their branches reach overhead and meet across the river to form a solid canopy of leaves. In one such place wait 16 large spiders. These creatures lurk in the branches overhead and drop web lines, attempting to snare the PCs passing beneath.

The spiders are quite good at angling for their meals. They must strike to hit AC 10 less the target's Dexterity bonus regardless of the type of armor worn. Magical armor or protection (such as a *ring of protection*) allows the magical bonus to be counted toward armor class determination. Thus, a warrior wearing *chain mail +1* and a *ring of protection +2* is effectively AC 7 (less further Dexterity adjustments).

Any PC snared by a web line may cut the line by striking AC 10 with any edged weapon. The web lines cannot be torn free with bare strength, as hands used to break lines are then stuck to the webbing. Victims dangling in mid-air have no support to try breaking free. This, however, is unlikely, as the spiders are so small that they cannot lift PCs except possibly halflings or light-weight elves (generally under about 60 lbs.). The spiders lurk 30′ overhead and take approximately five rounds to reel in any snared PCs. Anyone falling into the river from this height suffers no damage, but the DM should account for any armor worn if PCs try to swim. If the spiders are not able to lift a meal to the trees, they descend on web lines to attack. They are used to easy meals such as birds, fish, and small game, so the attack breaks off after a few of the arachnids are killed.

Large spiders (16): INT non-; AL N; AC 8; MV 6, web 15; HD 1+1; hp 7; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA webs, poison (type A); SZ S; ML 7; XP 175; *MM*/326.

3. Outpost. At some point, the PCs are forced to leave the river and continue to the temple of Maalpherus on foot. There is a landing used by the temple about 10 miles south of the second fork in the river (eight days or so since the PCs began the journey at the mouth of the river). There are no boats on the bank of the river; however, if they look closely, the PCs find lengths of chain anchored in the ground by thick posts. These chains are used to secure the occasional boat that makes

The Priesthood of Maalpherus

The dark god of disease and plague makes many demands of his priests. Madpherus requires total dedication to his cause, so his priests have few worldly goods. The colors of the priesthood are dull browns and dark reds. He disallows the use of edged weapons in combat, save those with edges that rip or tear flesh. Most of the clerics at his temple in the Reaching Fens carry large maces with hooked spikes that resemble claws. These weapons cause more damage (1d6+2) than do standard footman's maces.

The spheres of influence available to followers of Maalpherus are: All, Guardian (minor), Healing, Necromantic, Protection, and Sun (minor). Priests may use only the reverse form of the Sun sphere and are strongly encouraged to use the reverse of Healing and Necromantic spheres. In fact, Maalpherus feels that only the strongest of his followers should survive, and priests are permitted to use true Healing only on themselves. They may not use this power even to heal comrades. All priests of 5th level or greater receive a bonus spell from their god: *cause disease*.

Children of Maalpherus

Climate/Terrain: Any
Frequency: Very Rare
Organization: Nil
Activity Cycle: Night
Diet: Nil
Intelligence: Non-(0)
Treasure: Nil
Alignment: Neutral
No. Appearing: 2–8
Special Defenses: Spell immunity
Armor Class: 6
Movement: 6
Hit Dice: 4
THAC0: 17
No. of Attacks: 1
Damage/Attack: 1–8
Special Attacks: See below
Magic Resistance: See below
Size: M (6′ tall)
Morale: Special
XP Value: 650

The Children of Maalpherus are zombies created by the priesthood of the god of disease and plague. As the corpses animated by the priests often come from those who have angered the god, these zombies are usually in even worse condition than others. The bodies are often missing large amounts of flesh, hair, and even some limbs (though there is a practical limit due to movement and attack purposes). They, like most undead, are immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, *death magic*, poisons, mind affecting spells, and cold-based spells. Crushing and piercing weapons cause no damage, and slashing weapon damage is regenerated at the rate of one hit point every two rounds. They cannot regenerate damage caused by fire, acid, or energy spells such as *magic missile*, *lightning bolt*, etc. A vial of holy water inflicts 3–10 hp damage (non-regenerative) on these creatures. Children of Maalpherus are most often found in swamps, sewers, and other disease-ridden places.

In addition to the normal damage caused by these zombies, there is a 25% chance that the individual struck will also become infected with some sort of disease (determined by DM). Because of their strong tie to the powers of their god, the Children of Maalpherus are more powerful than normal zombies and so are turned as spectres. To create such a zombie, a priest of Maalpherus must first cast *cause disease* on a corpse. Then, within 24 hours, the priest must cast an *animate dead* spell (which affects only the one corpse).

its way down the river on business for the temple. A path (of sorts) leads inland from this point. This path follows the drier regions of the marsh, and movement is doubled for those following it (20 miles per day). If they follow the path, the PCs reach the temple in just over two days.

There is a platform in the trees 200′ from the river directly along the path. It is well concealed in the leaves and moss, so PCs passing beneath it do not notice it unless they look straight up. Even then, there is only a 60% chance that they detect the structure.

During the day, five temple guards normally man this platform, watching the landing point and deterring any strangers from approaching the temple. They are armed with longbows, long swords, and hunting daggers, and they wear chain mail. They can easily see the river from their vantage point.

The guards have recently been ordered to observe strangers but not to attack. Upon spying the PCs at the river, one of the guards slips down from the trees to warn the temple of the intrusion. Unless the PCs notice the guards and take action against them, they should pass unharmed.

Guards (5): AL NE; AC 5; MV 12; F1; hp 11, 9 (+2), 8, 6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 14; XP 15; longbow, dagger, long sword.

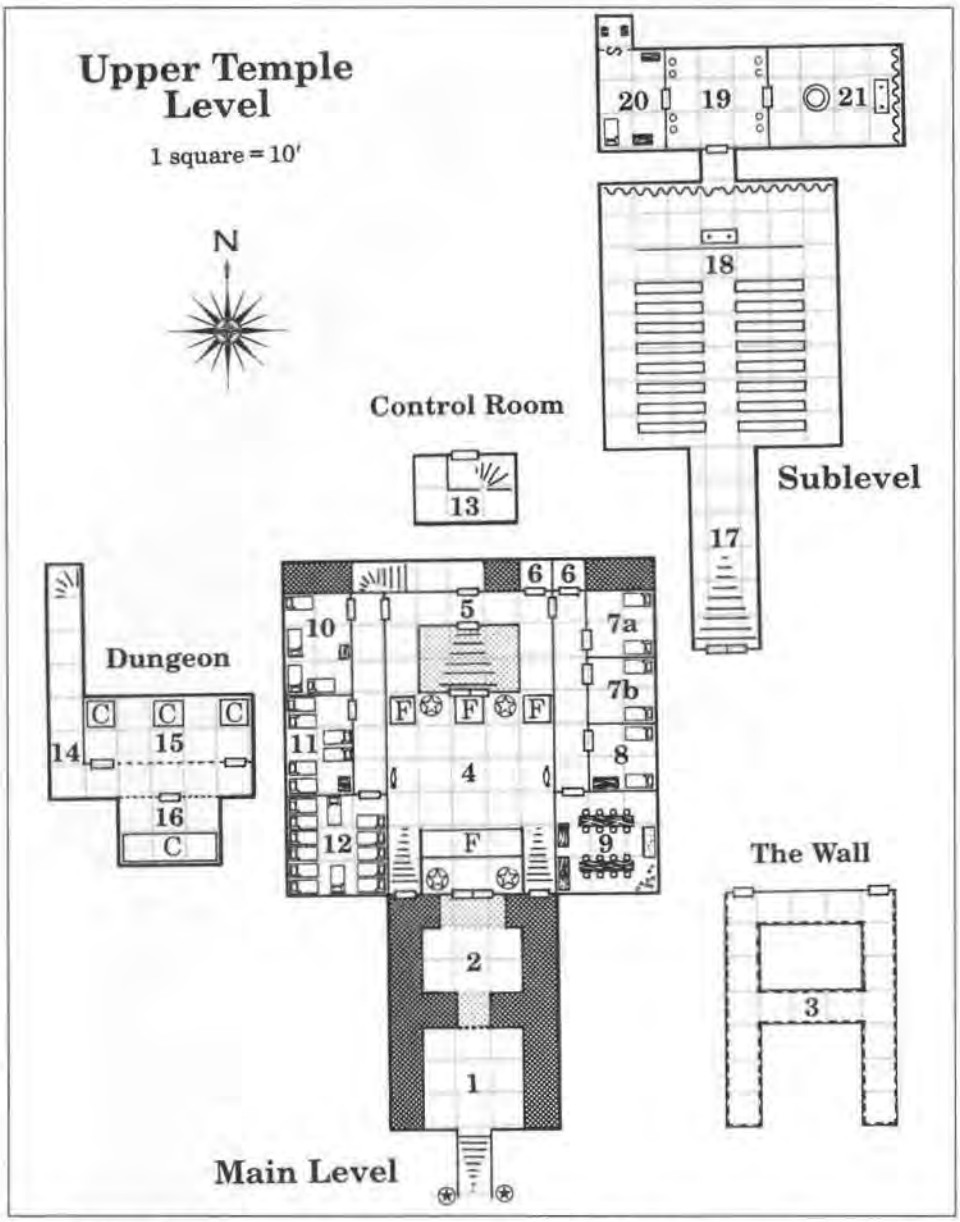
The Temple of Maalpherus

The temple dedicated to the god of disease and plague lies here in the heart of the swamp. Blight covers the vegetation in the surrounding area for 50 miles, but becomes more noticeable as one nears the temple.

The structure sits atop a mound of earth that rises from the surrounding stagnant pools of filth-ridden water. These pools form a natural moat around the temple, and a thin path of dirt (leading from the river landing) is the only way to reach the building on foot. A small opening in the canopy of leaves spreads above the temple, as no trees appear within 100 yards of it. There are no regular patrols in this area, for Maalpherus' priests consider themselves secluded enough so as not to worry about an attack.

The main building is a stone structure 100′ long and 110′ wide. The center 50′ of the building, running its entire length, is 40′ high. The two outside edges (both 30′ wide) are 20′ high. There are no windows or entrances to the main structure other than the main gate. This gate is protected by a walled courtyard (areas 1 and 2). The courtyard sits open to the sky and is raised 10′ from the earth upon which stands the temple. The wall, which has been outfitted with battlements, is 30′ high (20′ above the courtyard).

The DM should remember that while the temple is not a fortress designed to repel a large assault, the leaders are very intelligent and organize a coordinated resistance if the alarm is raised. The leaders of the temple's forces (the captain in room 10 and the priests in room 8) command their underlings to the best of their ability. It is highly unlikely that a coordinated assault on the PCs will consist of a mad rush into battle. The mind flayer wishes only to draw the PCs to the temple with the cure.



Upper Temple Level

1. Outer Courtyard. A 20′ long set of stairs leads up to this area which stands 10′ above the island. The stone walls extend outward to either side of the stairs. Resting on pedestals at the stair's bottom are twin, cowled granite skulls that stare at anyone approaching the temple. The courtyard is clean and contains nothing. A 10′ square tunnel runs underneath the wall toward the inner courtyard. Any intruders entering the outer courtyard are fired upon by the guards on the wall. The outer courtyard is lit with torches at night.

2. Inner Courtyard. This area is much like the outer courtyard. If invaders reach here, the guards atop the wall drop the portcullis in the tunnel between areas 1 and 2, hoping to trap invaders in the inner courtyard. The portcullis is not terribly heavy and can be lifted with a combined Strength of 40. This area is lit by torches at night. There is a 20′ wide, 10′ high tunnel which leads northward to a pair of great double doors.

These doors, carved and beaten from brass, depict scenes of huddled masses cowering before a great hooded, robed figure. The people shown on the doors are covered in bandages, and many are missing limbs. Some also carry crutches and walking staves. The doors are magically sealed shut and open only if the brass rings are pulled after speaking, "In disease and death are all things equal." They are resistant to all magic (though not to a *wish* or *limited wish*) and have a 25% chance of holding against spells cast by a 6th-level caster. The chance is adjusted +5% for each level below 6th of the caster, and –5% for each level above 6th of the caster. They open outward into the courtyard.

3. The Surrounding Wall. This wall is 30′ above the earthen mound and is topped by battlements on both sides (outer and courtyard). The wall is manned by eight 1st-level fighters who have orders to fire upon any strangers approaching the temple. The illithid wishes to make at least a pretense of resistance at this stage. The guards are commanded by two sergeants (2nd-level fighters). All of those on the wall are equipped with a long sword, longbow, 20 arrows, curved dagger, chain mail, and shield. If the PCs decide to approach at night, the top of the wall is not lit with torches. The guards sit in the darkness and avoid looking directly at the courtyards to preserve their night vision.

The guards fire arrows at intruders both outside the walls and within the courtyards. They gain a bonus of +6 to their armor class against missile weapons because of their cover (AC –1: chain mail and bonus). If an enemy gains entrance to the inner courtyard, the portcullis is dropped (the mechanism is above the tunnel connecting the courtyards), and the guards fire upon intruders. If a battle seems to be going badly, one guard attempts to reach the main building to alert the main temple of an invasion. The two doors atop the wall lead to stairs which descend into area 4 (see below). The doors are of beaten brass and are similar to the double doors of area 2.

Guard (8): AL NE; AC 4 or –1; MV 12; F1; hp 11, 10, 9 (×2), 8 (×2), 7, 6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 16; ML 15; XP 15; dagger, longbow, long sword.

Sergeant (2): AL NE; AC 4 or –1; MV 12; F2; hp 21, 18; THAC0 18; #AT 1; S 17; ML 16; XP 65; dagger, longbow, long sword.

4. Main Temple Entrance. The double doors from the inner courtyard lead here to a large entryway with a ceiling towering 40′ overhead. The room is well lit by *continual light* spells. The northern doors, like the southern, are made of beaten bronze. These doors lead down to the main temple (see area 17) and have the same properties as those of the inner courtyard. Two hallways, only 10′ high, lead north to either side of these doors. The two single doors on the south wall at the top of the stairs lead to the outer wall (area 3). The floor here is of simple stone. The rest of the room is constructed of the same material, but the walls and ceiling are intricately painted. The predominant colors are deep reds, browns, and black.

Everywhere one looks is a scene similar to those portrayed on the door—diseased and decaying people watched over by priests in crimson robes. The four stone statues in the room are 8′-tall cowled figures wearing robes and staring toward the center of the room. Their faces cannot be seen, and they are inanimate and non-magical. There are also two large bronze gongs hanging from stands at the center of the eastern and western walls. Any guards wishing to raise the alarm enter and strike either gong, which rings throughout the temple.

The trap doors in the room do not open automatically but are triggered manually with a release mechanism in room 13. Through a peephole, the guard in room 13 watches the entrance room for anyone not obviously associated with the temple. If PCs enter and step on a trap door, the guard releases the door, causing PCs to fall into the violet fungi below.

After any victims have fallen into the fungi-filled pens (areas 15 and 16), the trap doors slowly close, sealing the victims inside. The pits take three rounds to close and can be wedged slightly open by metallic objects.

The long trap door to the south opens into the pen marked area 16. The three northern trap doors open into the pen marked area 15. The guard looks through a small window in the north wall above the double doors. The window is difficult to see while standing in the room because it appears to be part of the mural that surrounds it.

PCs donning the garb of the guards outside can pass this room (as long as the alarm has not been raised by one of these guards), for there is no password that the guard in room 13 is expecting to hear. If they search the room or examine the statues closely, the guard becomes suspicious and raises the alarm.

5. Hallway. The hallway here is lit every 30′ with *continual light* spells. Of the five doors in the hallway, only the one on the south wall is locked (all are made from wood). This door opens into the room in which sits the guard who operates the trap door mechanisms (room 13).

6. Lavatories. These two rooms are the lavatories used by the inhabitants of the temple. They have a primitive plumbing system consisting of running water flowing through pipes which deposit waste into the swamp.

7a. Acolytes' Quarters. This room contains only bare essentials. Maalpherus demands total devotion of his clerics and allows no distractions from his faith. In this room are two bunk beds that have thin mattresses and single sheets. There are two unlocked footlockers under each of the beds, one for each acolyte. The footlockers contain nothing but spare robes, rope belts, and sandals. There are mats upon which the acolytes kneel for private worship on the floor, and the room is lit by eight candles set in wall sconces.

The four acolytes that are in the room are currently resting. Two of the three on the beds are actually asleep, and the fourth acolyte kneels by the south wall in silent prayer. All are human males who prepare for intruders if the alarm was raised (though they still remain in the room if the alarm has indeed sounded). Loud noises outside the room (and certainly within) alert the acolytes and wake those who are sleeping. If they are given time to prepare, they wear chain mail and carry shields and clawed maces.

Acolytes (4): AL NE; AC 10 or 4; MV 12; P2; hp 15, 12, 11, 8; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; W 13; ML 18; XP 175; spells: (acolyte 1) *cause light wounds*, darkness*, sanctuary*; (acolyte 2) *cure light wounds, curse*, protection from good**; (acolyte 3) *cause light wounds*, cure light wounds, sanctuary*; (acolyte 4) *cure light wounds, darkness*, protection from good**.

7b. Acolytes' Quarters. This room is similar in all respects to the above room (7a), except that there are currently only three occupants. The acolytes here have just returned from exercises with one of the priests in room 8 and are wearing their armor. Each also carries a shield and clawed mace. If the alarm has been sounded, the acolytes here are led by one of the priests (room 8).

8. Priests' Quarters. The door to this room is protected by a *glyph of warding* that causes 3–18 hp cold damage to anyone pressing the door latch without speaking the word *kuhtehr*. This room is similar to those of the acolytes above. There are but two single beds here, however. There is also a single desk in the corner of the room upon which rests a stack of parchment and a quill and ink set. There are few written things on these pages, mostly notes pertaining to the duties of temple clergy.

The room is currently lit by candles set in the walls, and if the alarm has not been raised, the priests are both here, discussing temple matters. The first priest has been in the room for quite a while and so is unarmored. The second priest has just returned from training with the acolytes in room 7b and wears his *chain mail +1*. If the alarm has been sounded, the first priest is present and armored, though the second has taken the three acolytes from room 7b to confront intruders. If given adequate warning, the priests prepare for battle by casting protective spells.

Priest (2): AL NE; AC 9 or 2; MV 12; P5; hp 39, 31; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; SD +1 saves vs. mind-affecting spells; D 15, W 15; ML 18; XP 1,400; spells: (priest 1) *cure light wounds, curse*, protection from good*, sanctuary; aid, barkskin, resist cold, silence 15′ radius; cause blindness*, cause disease*, cause paralysis**; (priest 2) *cure light wounds* (×2), *darkness*, protection from good*; resist fire, silence 15′ radius* (×2), *withdraw; animate dead, cause disease*, dispel magic; chain mail +1*, shield, clawed mace.

9. Dining Room. Within this room are two long tables surrounded by wooden chairs, taller tables for preparing food by the western wall, a fire pit on the eastern wall, and barrels holding assorted foodstuffs. There are hot coals in the fire pit, though they produce no flame at the moment. The barrels contain both edible vegetation from the marsh as well as salted meats. There is a supply of fresh water as well, though this is the only form of drink to be found within the temple. The stores of the temple are always well supplied, as foraging and hunting parties regularly journey into the surrounding wilderness. There are currently two guards here from room 12 who are on call but have come for something to eat. They are sitting across the room from the door, close to the food. As a result of this, they may not be automatically attacked by melee weapons if they are surprised.

Guards (2): AL NE; AC 4; MV 12; F1; hp 9, 8; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 16; ML 15; XP 15; dagger, long sword.

10. Officers' Quarters. Though the occupants are currently present, the door to this room is locked. This room, lit by candles, is very ordered, militaristic, and sparse. The utilitarian officers of the Guard of the Temple of Maalpherus live here. There are three double bunk beds and a single bed here. The three double beds are used by the sergeants and the lieutenant, and the captain sleeps in the single bed. There are personal footlockers beneath each bed (all locked) which contain personal items as well as 10–15 gp (though the lieutenant has three times as much, and the captain ten times that amount). A small table stands in the southeast corner of the room and serves as a writing table or desk when needed. If the alarm has not been raised, five of the seven officers are present (the other two are stationed on the wall outside). They are all awake, sitting about the room talking. All are unarmed, but weapons are within easy reach.

If the alarm is sounded, all the officers are armed and ready for combat. They organize the remaining soldiers in rooms 11 and 12 into a fighting force to repel invaders. It is up to the DM to work a specific battle plan that reacts to the PCs' actions, but note that the commanders are intelligent leaders who do not rush heedlessly into combat. The lieutenant, Brannock, is fiercely loyal to his commander and is an expert at fighting with two short swords. His high Dexterity negates penalties for two-handed fighting. He usually fights with his magical sword in his right hand. The captain commands the Guard and answers only to the high priest (see area 18) though he is respectful to any of the priesthood. He fights with his bastard sword (in one hand) and has the advantage of always striking first in a combat round due to its magical *quickness*.

Sergeants (3): AL LE; AC 10 or 4; MV 12; F2; hp 22, 19, 17; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 17; ML 16; XP 65; dagger, long sword.

Lieutenant Brannock: AL LE; AC 6 or –1; MV 12; F6; hp 52; THAC0 11/13; #AT 5/2; Dmg by weapon type; SA specialized in short sword; S 17, D 18, C 16; ML 17; XP 1,400; *short sword +2*, short sword, *chain mail +2*.

Captain Dormand: AL LE; AC 8 or –3; MV 12; F9; hp 94; THAC0 6 (sword) or 9 (dagger); #AT 2 (sword) or 3/2 (dagger); Dmg by weapon type; SA first attack with sword, specialized in bastard sword; S 18/67, D 16, C 17; ML 17; XP 2,000; *bastard sword of quickness +3* (allows first attack), *dagger +1*, long sword, *plate mail +2*, *shield +1*.

11. Guards' Quarters. This room is very similar to the officers' quarters, but it contains six bunk beds. A small table stands against the east wall. There are personal chests beneath the beds, all of which are locked. These chests contain personal items, changes of clothes, and some coins of worth (10–20 sp and 3–6 gp each). All of the guards are present here, save one who is in the trap door control room (area 13). These guards are currently not on duty and are sleeping. If loud noises (such as combat) have been made in the area, the guards are awake and ready for battle (chain mail, shield, long sword, dagger, with possibility of long bow). They are definitely awake if the alarm has been raised, but their presence in this room is then dependent upon the officers, who organize the troops for a coordinated assault on invaders. If the PCs encounter the guards awake in the room, the guards are unarmored but have weapons within easy reach. There are a dozen long bows with a complement of arrows in quivers hanging on the east wall above the table.

Guards (11): AL NE; AC 10 or 4; MV 12; F1; hp 10 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 16; ML 15; XP 15; dagger, longbow, long sword. All guards have these statistics unless otherwise noted.

12. Guards' Quarters. This room is similar in all respects to the above room save for dimensions and occupants. Though there are enough beds to house 26 men, at the moment there are only 16 present. Eight are on duty on the wall outside, and the remaining two are getting something to eat in the dining hall. This group is currently awake, as they are on call (a sort of inactive duty). As a result of this, they are armored (chain mail and shield) and have weapons, though they may easily be surprised if not alerted by the alarm or loud noises. On the north wall hang 18 bows and a supply of arrows (there are pegs for 26, but the wall guards are armed with long bows).

13. Control Room. This room is dimly lit by a single candle. The guard here sits in a chair and peers through a 1' square opening in the south wall. The guard cannot be easily seen from outside (room 4), as the small window appears as part of the painting on the entrance room's wall. The room is kept very dim so the light cannot be seen from room 4; because of this, the guard has a difficult time distinguishing between friend and foe entering the room until he is attacked. As a result, he automatically loses initiative unless the PCs do something to convince him they are enemies.

There are four levers in the floor located next to his chair. These levers release the four different trap doors in room 4. If he identifies intruders in the entrance room, the guard opens these doors, dropping the PCs into the pits below. The trap doors do not automatically close after they are opened—the guard closes them by turning the requisite wheel (of four) that is set on the western wall. Turning the wheel pulls the chains which slowly close the trap doors (taking three rounds to do so), trapping victims in the pens which hold violet fungi.

14. Storage Space. This area is simply a location in the lower hallway which holds six-long handled torches, spare rags, and a barrel of lamp oil. Occasionally, occupants of the temple have need to enter the area of the pens (15 and 16). When they need to do this, they employ (8′ long) torches to keep the violet fungi at bay. Hanging on a peg set into the wall is a large ring of keys that open the doors to these cages.

15. Trapping Pen. This pen holds anyone falling through the three smaller trap doors in room 4 above. The pen contains an assortment of ordinary molds and fungi in addition to the violet fungi placed here to dispose of intruders. The fungi live off of the meat (sometimes live) thrown down into the pens from above. At the moment, the violet fungi are evenly spaced throughout the cage, such that one or two at a time (DM's discretion) can attack anyone falling into their home. The rest of the fungi have long since associated the vibrations of things falling into the pen as food, so any who are out of reach move as quickly as possible (which is not very quickly at all) to feed on whatever has fallen from above. They can be kept at bay with flame.

Violet fungi (6): INT non-; AL N; AC 7; MV 1; HD 3; hp 21, 18 (×2), 16, 14 (×2); THAC0 17; #AT 1–4; Dmg nil; SA attack rots flesh in one round (save vs. poison or *cure disease*); SZ M; ML 12; XP 175; *MM*/120.

16. Trapping Pen. This pen is identical to the one above, except that it holds only four violet fungi. The pen is smaller than the other, and it lies beneath the large trap door in room 4.

17. Descent to the Main Chapel. This wide stone passage is unlit and descends 30′ from the entry above (area 4). The passage leads to the main chapel.

The doors at the top of the stairs (properties of which are described in area 2) appear the same but are not magically sealed from this side. The air in this lower hallway is cooler and a bit damp. The walls themselves are constructed of painted stone. The deep red color at the top of the stairs becomes lighter as the corridor continues north. By the time the PCs reach the chapel, the walls are painted in a maddening pattern of blood-red and black.

18. Main Chapel. This large room is where the devotees of Maalpherus gather to pay tribute to their dark deity. These gatherings have become much more frequent and frenzied since the avatar of Maalpherus appeared on this plane (though the "avatar" is actually the illithid). There are eight pairs of pews, split down the middle of the chapel by a wide aisle that runs from the hallway to the altar. The pews are carved from dark oak and are very simple, adorned with nothing but the cowled image of Maalpherus on their ends. The walls of the chapel are the same dark swirling colors of black and blood-red found in the hallway to the south. If the PCs stare at the walls for any length of time, a feeling of queasiness washes over them, as the swirling colors actually seem to move. Both the floor and ceiling of the chapel are a polished, glossy black.

At the north end of the chapel is a short (3′ high) railing of stone that separates the pews from the altar. There is no break in the length of the railing, though it stops 10′ short of the west and east walls.

The altar is a massive dull black slab of stone that was found within the confines of the swamp and brought here. The 8′ long, 5′ wide altar stands 4′ high, though the slab itself is only 2′ thick. It rests upon four granite blocks that raise the altar 2′ into the air.

Anyone who is not a follower of Maalpherus who so much as brushes the altar must make a save vs. magic or be overcome with *sickness* for 2–5 rounds, unable to take any action but stumbling around and retching. Any priest, paladin, or strong follower of another faith who touches the altar suffers burns for 2–12 hp damage and must save vs. poison or become infected with a rotting disease that causes 1–2 hp damage per round until cured (or until the PC dies).

A large tapestry covers the entire north wall and is divided down the center to allow access to the chambers to the north. The tapestry depicts various scenes of people going about everyday life, though the skies above them are gray and depressing. The figures in the tapestry have all been inflicted with a horrid rotting disease which has caused them to lose digits and limbs.

Theolars, the high priest of Maalpherus, is currently performing rites to his god and is standing to the north of the altar. He is attended by an acolyte, but there are no others present in the chapel at this time. As is required of the clerics, both are dressed in armor as well as ornate robes. When the PCs enter, Theolars is without his weapon. If possible, he retreats to his room (area 20), retrieves his flail, and returns to engage the PCs in battle. During this time, the acolyte attempts to keep the PCs from following Theolars. He is aware of his limitations (and the fact that he cannot survive a violent confrontation), so he uses threats, spells, and trickery to keep the PCs at bay.

Acolyte: AL NE; AC 4; MV 12; P2; hp 12; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by spell; D 15, W 13; ML 20; XP 175. Spells: *curse**, *darkness** (×2).

Theolars, high priest: AL NE; AC –1; MV 12; P9; hp 63; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon; SD +4 saves vs. mind-affecting spells; S 17, D 16, W 18; ML 19; XP 5,000. Spells: *cure light wounds* (×2), *curse**, *darkness** (×2), *protection from good**; *resist cold*, *resist fire*, *silence 15′ radius* (×2), *withdraw*, *wyvern watch*; *cause blindness**, *cause disease**, *dispel magic* (×2), *protection from fire*; *cure serious wounds*, *poison**, *spell immunity*, *slay living**.

Theolars wears *plate mail +2* under his deep red ceremonial robes. He also wears a silver *ring of human influence* on his left hand. On his head he wears an ornamental helm that allows him to see in total darkness (even magical *darkness*). On his belt he wears the three keys that open the chests in room 20 (two of which are in the secret chamber).

Though there is nothing on the altar, there is a hidden compartment carved into its underside. To find it, a PC must crawl under the altar and touch the stone slab itself (suffering any negative effects). Once found, the compartment door may be opened using tools (such as thieves' tools or even a pair of daggers). Opening the compartment in this manner takes 1d4+6 rounds (half that for a thief). It may be opened in 2–3 rounds if the PC doing so wishes to touch the stone. The compartment contains a large, ornate knife with a single serrated edge. It has a gold scrollwork hilt set with two large emeralds, and the handle is wrapped in bleached white leather. The knife radiates a magical aura and has a +4 bonus on attack and damage rolls. It also radiates an aura if

detect evil or *detect curse* spells are used upon it. The knife has *wounding* properties (as a *sword of wounding*) and causes an extra 1–3 hp damage per round per wound inflicted. The damage caused is of the same type of rotting disease caused by the altar. Damage can be stopped by either *cure disease* or *cure light wounds* (or more powerful curative spells), though the spell used in this fashion heals no damage. A single spell halts the infection, no matter how many wounds have been inflicted with the knife.

The possessor of the knife becomes very attached to it after only six hours. Soon thereafter, it becomes his weapon of choice in all situations. After a period of one week, the knife's owner depends on the weapon for survival; if separated from it for even a few minutes, he is afflicted with the same rotting disease delivered by the knife. One hit point per day is lost (not healable) until death results. If the knife is returned to his possession, hit points are restored at the rate of one per day. This disease which affects the owner can be cured only by a great quest or the destruction of the knife (perhaps a follow up adventure created by the DM).

19. Priests' Preparation Room. This plain room hidden behind the tapestries of the chapel is where the priests prepare for large services given in the temple. There are several ceremonial robes and mantles hanging from pegs on the north wall. Four basins of wash water rest on small stands along the western and eastern walls. In the northeast corner of the room are boxes of spare candles, candelabra, cones of incense, and other trappings of religious worship. Though some items display the mark of Maalpherus, none are inherently evil.

20. Private quarters. This is the sleeping chamber of the high priest. His room is plain but nicely furnished. The walls of the room are painted with murals. The north wall shows a family of five—mother, father, a son, and two daughters—in the prime of their health. The east wall shows the same five people, yet there is a slight change. They are a bit wan, and the artistry is such that the gleam of life has left their eyes. The south wall shows the family again, yet now the quintet wears tattered clothing and all have visible sores. The final mural on the west wall shows the five people in an advanced state of some horrid disease which has eaten away at their bodies and their spirits. The room's furnishings consist of a single bed, a small chest of drawers containing personal clothing, a writing table and chair, and a small trunk at the foot of the bed.

The trunk is locked and trapped with a fear gas. The gas expands to fill this room and the preparation room next door, dissipating after six hours. Anyone caught within the confines of the gas is affected as per the 4th-level wizard spell *fear* unless a save vs. poison is made. Holding one's breath does not offer protection from the gas, as it is also absorbed through the skin (though if this is done a +2 on saves is conferred). The trunk contains a platinum unholy symbol (worth 500 gp), an assortment of 30 small gemstones (worth 25 gp each), and a few folds of fine silk (worth 200 gp). Leaning in the corner of the room (if it has not been removed by its owner) is *Painwracker*, the *footman's flail +2* that belongs to the high priest. Painwracker has the following special abilities: *cause disease* on attack roll of a natural 20; creature struck is affected as by *symbol of pain* on an attack roll of 19 or 20; causes double total damage on 18–20.

The secret door on the north wall is opened by simultaneously pressing both eyes of the youngest daughter in the wall's mural. This trigger is a good 10′ from the door itself. The small chamber beyond the secret door holds the wealth of the temple of Maalpherus. This wealth is contained in two small chests. It is not great, as Maalpherus does not wish his followers to become obsessed with monetary things, but he realizes the necessity of some amount of wealth. In addition to the chests, a *shield +2* leans against the wall.

The first chest contains only gemstones: 26 yellow sunstones (50 gp), two large black pearls (base 500 gp), three emeralds (base 500 gp), a large sapphire (base 1,000 gp), four topazes (base 250 gp), and five small diamonds (base 100 gp). The chest is locked (the high priest carries the key) and is trapped as well. Unless the chest is opened with the key (or a thief is successful at picking the lock) *and* the lock is pressed as the lid is opened, three darts fire from the front of the chest to strike whoever opens it. The darts cause 1–2 hp damage each and are coated with type B poison (20 hp damage in 2–12 minutes, or 1–3 hp damage if save).

The second chest contains a silver necklace set with six pieces of jade (1,500 gp) and two platinum rings etched with intricate designs (250 gp) in a crystal box. The chest also holds a *potion of flying*, a *potion of fire resistance*, a *scroll of protection from magic*, a *scroll of earth elemental control* (*Tome of Magic*), a scroll of five priest spells: *enthrall*, *slow poison*, *cure disease*, *spell immunity*, *stone tell*, a *decanter of endless water*, and three cones of *incense of obsession* (the high priest is aware of the properties of these cones of incense but keeps them for bartering purposes). This chest, is also locked. Opening the chest without speaking the name "Maalpherus" causes a *symbol of sleep* to flare into existence above the chest. This is likely to affect all PCs due to their experience level. Woe to those who left a force of angry temple defenders behind them! However, because the room in which the chest is contained is so small, it is unlikely that more than two or three PCs actually see the *symbol* (DM decision based upon PC actions and locations).

21. Private Chapel. This room is the chapel used exclusively by the high priest of the temple. Every surface of this chamber is a dull, flat black that seems to absorb any light brought near it. The altar here is similar in appearance to the one in the main chapel, but on a smaller scale. The material of the altar is the same black stone, yet this is streaked with fine red swirls making the stone appear similar to marble. It is 3′ long and 1′ deep and high. It rests on a small tier rather than supports, so the top of the altar is just over 3′ from the floor. Though nothing happens to those touching this altar, a feeling of sickness hangs around it, felt by all who approach.

Two large candelabra rest upon the altar, each having seven branches holding a white candle streaked with red. Behind the altar hangs a large tapestry which covers the entire east wall. The tapestry shows a scene of a siege of a large keep sitting atop a craggy hill. All of the besieging warriors are diseased and rotting zombies.

To either side of the altar, a bronze gong hangs from a small rack. A

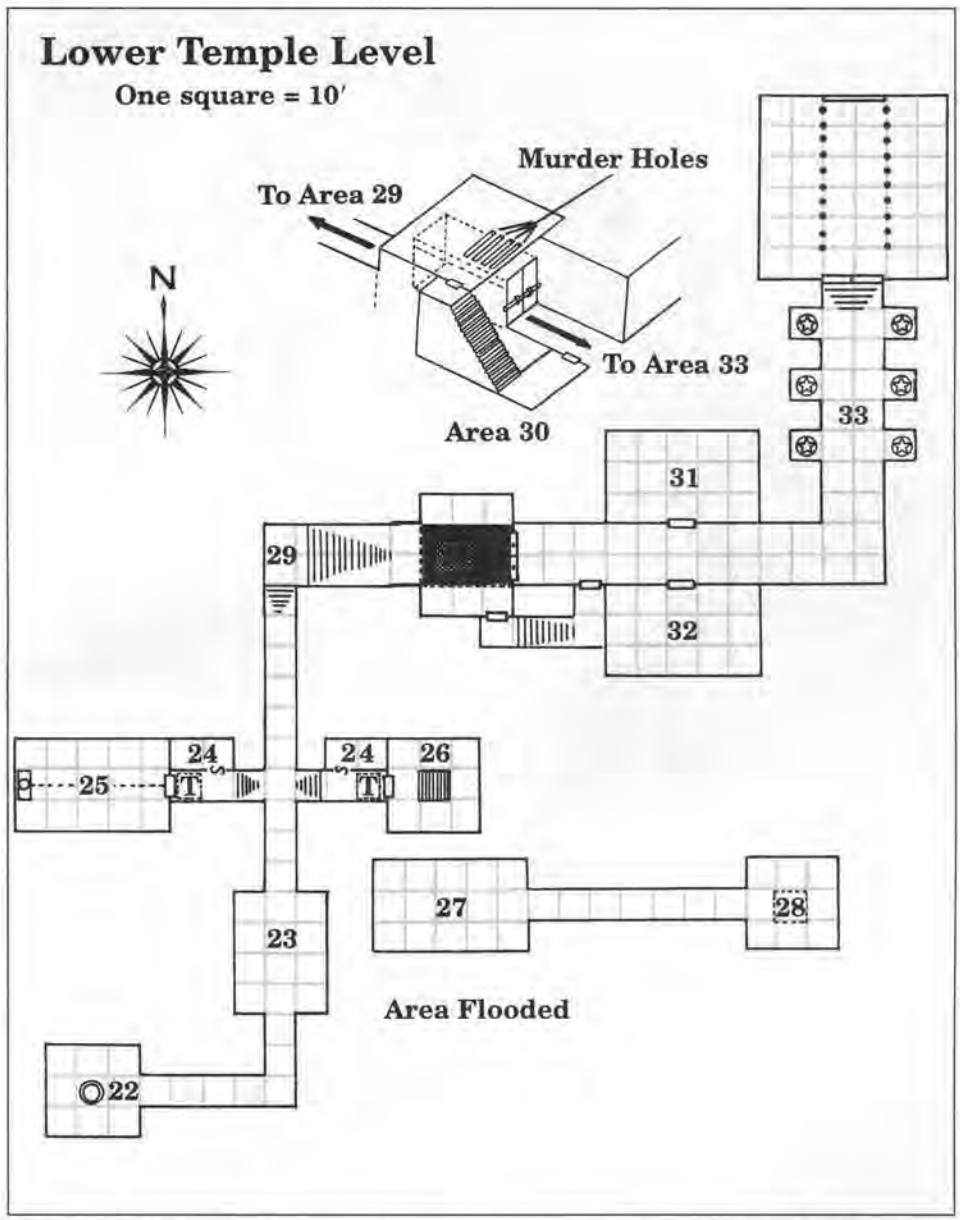
mallet, the handle coated in silver, hangs next to each.

Upon the floor just to the east of the center of the room is a white circle of inlaid stone. This stone circle is approximately 8′ in diameter, and the white stone which makes up the circle's border is approximately 1′ wide. If the candles on the altar are lit and both gongs in the room are sounded, the white circle slowly lowers into the floor to reveal a staircase that descends below the room. The stairs are each about 3′ wide and are only a few inches thick. They spiral downward counterclockwise within the confines of an 8′ diameter cylinder, but they appear to be suspended in mid-air, attached to nothing. The stairs continue down for 100′ before exiting into room 22. The stairs remain usable for 10 rounds before the opening in room 21 is sealed (though it can be opened again—see below for details).

Lower Temple Level

22. Receiving Room. The staircase from room 21 descends into this room which has standing water on the floor to a depth of about 1′. If the PCs descend into this room, they see the stairs winding down out of an 8′ diameter hole in the ceiling. The stairs upon which they walked are truly suspended in mid-air within this room. Two rounds after the last PC has stepped off of the last step, the stairs slowly rise into the hole in the ceiling. A stone disk follows the steps upward, sealing the hole. Once this disk is in place, the PCs notice that it closely resembles the white stone circle inlaid in the floor in room 21. To open the staircase from this level, one has but to stand beneath the white circle (which is in the center of the ceiling) and wish for the stairs to descend. At this point, the circle slowly lowers to floor level (under water). The stone disk does not crush anything beneath it but merely hovers in place until solid objects below it are removed.

23. Hanging Sorrow. Along the sides of the passage hang a great number of decaying bodies of humans and humanoids who have died within the confines of the temple. They hang from their ankles or their wrists, shackled in chains. The bodies are crammed together in close proximity, and the stench here is sickening.



24. Trap Release. These small rooms contain nothing more than the release mechanism that raises the stone blocks which seal the hallway after the trap in room 25 has been sprung. A loop of thick chain hangs from a small hole in the ceiling. When pulled, this chain slowly raises the stone block sealing off either room 25 or 26, until it is flush with the hallway's ceiling.

25. False Mushroom. The hallway before this room rises out of the water such that the stone floor is relatively dry. The door to this room is made of undecorated cast iron, and it is sealed with both a mundane lock and a *wizard lock* (at 10th level). Upon the center of this door is a large *glyph of warding* which glows in the darkness. The *glyph* causes the first person touching the door to be paralyzed (save vs. paralysis) for 30 minutes. A successful *dispel magic* (vs. 10th level magic) dispels the *glyph* and the *wizard lock*.

Once the door is opened, the PCs see a room which contains only a 2′ high stone pedestal against the far west wall. The pedestal is brightly lit by an unseen source that casts illumination in a 10′ radius about it. Upon the

pedestal rests a glass-encased terrarium. Even from across the room it is easy to tell that the terrarium contains three pale white mushrooms streaked with bright red along with other small fungus and moss.

These mushrooms were set here by the mind flayer as bait to trap the PCs. They are not the mushrooms that the PCs seek, but a rather good imitation. A druid or ranger coming within 10′–20′ of the terrarium has a 10% chance per level of realizing the ruse. To reach the pedestal, the PCs must bypass two other traps which were laid by the mind flayer. The creature hoped these traps would be obvious and easy to circumvent, causing the PCs to be overconfident. The real trap is the terrarium itself.

The first of the two traps are a series of pressure plates set into the floor. There is a 50% chance per step taken that a plate is stepped on (assume a 2′ stride). Pressing on a plate causes a volley of ten darts to fire from the ceiling in a 3′ radius around the plate. From 4–7 darts strike at a single figure stepping on the plate, and the darts strike with a THAC0 of 10 (note a lack of shield or Dexterity bonus). The darts cause 2 hp damage each and are coated with type D poison (onset time 1–2 minutes, 30/2–12 hp damage). The pressure plates are rather obvious, as are the holes in the ceiling. A thief has double the normal chance for finding traps to detect the plates, and even a non-thief has a 20% chance of finding them if they look closely at the floor. If the pressure plates are discovered, a PC may bypass them by rolling their Dexterity or less (d20) per 10′ traveled, but never with worse than a 60% chance of success.

The second trap is activated when the boundary of the cylinder of light is broken. When this occurs, a sharp steel shaft fires down from the ceiling. The steel shaft causes 2–16 hp damage to any PC struck, and it remains in place for five rounds, trapping anyone struck for the duration. After this time, the shaft draws up into its recess in the ceiling. There are a number of these shafts along the perimeter of the light, so many objects could be struck at once. The trap may be easily triggered by breaking the light boundary with an inanimate object (which may likely be destroyed, however). A close examination of the ceiling reveals the holes from which the steel shafts exit. The border of light may be crossed safely while the steel shafts are retracting into the ceiling (which takes two rounds).

The true trap is magical in nature and almost impossible to detect (unless a *find traps* spell is used). As soon as the terrarium is touched, the light above extinguishes and the floor of the room parts in the center (dashed line on map) and opens, spilling anyone and everything in it (including the terrarium and pedestal) into room 27. At the same time, the 10′ × 10′ blocks in the hallway (marked by the "T" on the map) drop, sealing off the passages to rooms 25 and 26. The PCs are then left to die (supposedly killed by the children of Maalpherus in room 28). The lizard men from rooms 31 and 32 raise the stone blocks to retrieve the bodies of the PCs after 24 to 48 hours. They have been instructed by the illithid to check this trap every day. If the PCs open the terrarium (by breaking the case—there is no lid), they can tell that the mushrooms are indeed false, as the coloration easily wipes or washes off. The hue of the fungi is merely a tinted powder that has been painted on.

26. Iron Grill. Like the hallway leading to room 25, the hallway before

this room rises out of the water. The wooden door to this room is intricately carved with many leering human and semi-human faces. It is also locked. Even if the lock is picked, however, the door must be forced open, for the wood has swollen in the damp air. The room beyond the door is dark and plain. There is a 10′ square iron grill set into the center of the stone floor. The bars are attached to an iron frame which is deeply set into the stone. As a result of this, there is only half the normal chance to bend bars/lift gates. The air coming from the area beneath the grill smells of rotting meat.

The room below is room 28. Light dropped into this room reveals moving humanoid shapes, but the light must be suspended in some fashion. A torch dropped into the room is extinguished by the water covering the floor. *Light* spells cast on items dropped into the room are not extinguished, but the 3′ of water on the floor makes this light ineffectual. Spells cast into the room itself have normal effect.

27. The Pit. This room is 40′ below room 25, but PCs falling from that room suffer only 2d6 hp damage due to the high level of water. PCs need not fear drowning (unless knocked unconscious), for the water is merely 3′ deep. Dexterity bonuses to armor class are halved in this depth of water unless PCs have experience fighting in waist-deep water. Combat may prove even more difficult for the shorter demi-humans. If the water is at neck level (or above), underwater combat rules apply. The stone block and terrarium from room 25 have fallen here as well, so shorter PCs could easily keep above water by standing on it. Also note that the walls are easily climbed (by thieves), and the door opening into room 25 remains open (unless closed by the PCs) and hanging by its hinges above. Retreat through the door proves difficult, however, due to the stone block trap described above. Soon after falling here, the PCs are attacked by the creatures in room 28.

28. Children of Maalpherus. This lightless room is 40′ below room 26 and is covered with 3′ of standing water. Standing within this room are seven children of Maalpherus (see sidebar on page 13), creatures created by the dark priests of the god of disease and decay. These creatures mill about the room aimlessly, waiting for corpses to be dropped from above. If the trap in room 25 is sprung, and victims fall into room 27, the children of Maalpherus slowly shamble down the hallway to attack those unfortunates.

Children of Maalpherus (7): INT non-; AL N; AC 6; MV 6; HD 4; hp 27; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1–8; SA disease; SD resistance to spells and weapons; SZ M; ML 20; XP 650; New Monster.

29. Landing. The floor of the passage rises up out of the water here, and PCs can look eastward to area 30 which is at the same horizontal level as this landing. The lizard men on watch at area 30 begin firing crossbow bolts at anyone not wearing temple garb. Stairs descend east into a hallway, where the water level is 2′ deep.

30. Defense of the Lizard Men. The floor of this 30′ × 40′ room is on the same level as the landing to the west (area 29). The center 20′ of the western wall is actually a low wall set with battlements, much as a castle wall. The six lizard men in this room, who are part of an advanced, more intelligent tribe, fire crossbow bolts at the PCs from behind this wall. They wear armor over their scaled hides and are armed with large crossbows and two-handed swords. The hallway descends from the landing and passes underneath room 30 (shaded area). The double doors are very thick and are not locked, but they are barred from the eastern side. PCs who stand before the doors and try to open them are attacked through the murder holes cut into the floor of this room. The lizard men continue to fire crossbows through the slits. As soon as a battle begins, one of the creatures strikes the large brass gong hanging by the door on the south wall to alert the rest of the tribe (in area 31) of the attack.

Lizard men (6): INT average; AL LE; AC 2; MV 9; HD 4; hp 24, 22 (×2), 19, 17 (×2); THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1–10 (sword) or 2–8 (crossbow); SZ L; ML 15; XP 270; *MM*/227.

31. Barracks. This large room houses part of the tribe of advanced lizard men who guard the gate in room 34. There are a full dozen of the creatures in addition to their leader. The leader is slightly larger than the others, but (as all are about 8′ tall) he is really distinguishable only by the wide brass collar he wears around his neck. The room is rather bare except for the crude beds standing just above the the water level, which is about 2′ deep, just as in the hall. There is a locked steel box under the leader's bed (and consequently under water). The box contains the tribe's payment from the temple: 329 gp and 412 sp. The leader has the key. If the alarm is sounded, the lizard men are armored and ready for combat. They wait behind the double doors in the hall for a coordinated attack against invaders.

Lizard man leader: INT average; AL LE; AC 5 or 2; MV 9; HD 5; hp 37; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1–10 sword, 2–8 crossbow; SZ L; ML 16; XP 420.

Lizard men (12): INT average; AL LE; AC 5 or 2; MV 9; HD 4; hp 27, 23 (×2), 20 (×3), 19, 18 (×4), 16; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1–10 (sword) or 2–8 (crossbow); SZ L; ML 15; XP 270; *MM*/227.

32. Barracks. This room is identical to room 31, except that there are only eight lizard men here. If the alarm is sounded, these lizard men are commanded by the leader (see area 31) to reinforce those in room 30.

33. The Watchers of the Doors. The water in the hallway here is 2′ deep. There are six stone statues standing in alcoves along the walls before the door. The statues stand on 2′ tall pedestals that lift them out of the water. Each of the statues is a dull flat black and appears to be carved from the same material as the altars in the chapel.

The southernmost pair of statues resemble humanoid warriors clad in full plate dress armor. They wear swords in scabbards on their left sides and hold halberds in their right hands. The halberds are 15′ long and extend into the hallway nearly touching 15′ over the center of the floor. The second pair of statues are carved into the form of bearded humans wearing voluminous swirling robes. The figures clutch intricately carved staves in their right hands, and their left hands are extended into the hall to point slightly downward to the PCs as they pass.

The northernmost pair of statues are humans in robes with deep cowls. They

each wear a breastplate of armor over their robes, and their stern, commanding faces can just be seen beneath the hoods. Their arms are folded across their chests, and one hand clutches a clawed mace similar to those used by the priests here.

The statues may look dangerous, but they take no action against the PCs as they pass. They do radiate magic, because these statues are a warning system for those within the next room. As the PCs pass by the first pair of warriors, a chime sounds within room 34. Passing by the second pair of statues causes the undead guardians of the next room to rise from the dust and ashes of the room. The third pair of statues triggers a *programmed illusion* when the PCs walk between them.

When this occurs, an illusion of a man-sized figure wearing a voluminous black robe appears at the head of the stairs. The figure has a hood cast over its head and its hands are hidden within the sleeves of the robe. The illusion even floats a few inches off the ground. As the PCs reach the stairs, the hooded figure says, "Approach ye servants of the Dark Lord. If you wish to grovel before your master, pass beyond and through, wavering not in your step. Keep to the path set before you, and hold tightly to your faith and the symbol of that faith lest you be lost forever in the darkness from which you will not return." Flying through the corridor, passing invisibly, swimming under the level of the water, or going through the hall in other ways does not bypass the effects of the watchers. The PCs can effectively pass if they have the ability to go behind the statues in some manner (*passwall*, *stone to mud*, *stone shape*, *dimension door*, etc.).

34. The Gate. The ceiling of this room arches 40′ overhead in the shadows. The sputtering torches fixed in sconces on each of the 10 pairs of pillars give little light which is poorly reflected, as every surface of this room is a dull, flat black. In stark contrast, a straight, 3′ wide path of dark red is painted on the floor from the doors to the edge of a great mirror affixed to the north wall. The unbreakable mirror stands 30′ tall and 20′ wide, framed in worked silver. It reflects the image of the room, yet it does not reflect the image of any creature (living or dead). To either side of the doors to this room are small racks which hang from the walls. On these racks hang five (two on one side, three on the other) bronze amulets which display the unholy symbol of Maalpherus. They do not radiate magic but are used for the journey to see the "avatar" of Maalpherus.

Littered about the room are piles of ash and bones, remnants of people long dead. Also hidden among the shadows are the gate's undead guardians. The essence of the wraiths can only be called into being if the second pair of statues outside is passed. The ghouls, however, are always present, and they attack any who do not wear the garb of a priest of Maalpherus (this would include the lizard men). The power of Maalpherus is so great here that there is no chance of turning these undead.

The last occupant of the room is Phendraax, the former high priest of the temple. The wretch spoke out against the illithid, claiming the creature to be an imposter (rightfully so). The mind flayer bent the high priest's mind to such an extent that it broke, leaving only a creature intensely loyal to "the avatar of the dark god." The illithid left him here to guard the gate and set up the priest's underling as his successor. Phendraxx cannot form a coherent sentence except for the whispered prayers to his god. Phendraax looks like a ghoul and may easily be mistaken for one at a distance. He wears his armor and tattered robe still, and he uses no weapon but his hands. These have grown into claws and cause considerable damage He uses his spells as his primary weapon, though, believing in the might of his god over his own strength. If possible in battle, he stays to the rear of the undead creatures, who do not harm him.

If the PCs wish to continue toward the illithid and obtain the true mushroom needed for the cure, they must follow the instructions of the illusion in front of the doors to this room. They must walk the path painted on the floor directly into the mirror. Whoever walks this path from door to mirror is transported to the south end of room 35. To return from the place on the other side of the mirror, one of the amulets hanging beside the doors must be used.

Ghouls (4): INT low; AL CE; AC 6; MV 9; HD 2; hp 15, 12, 10, 9; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1–3/1–3/1–6; SA paralyzation; SD immune to *sleep* and *charm*; SZ M; ML 12; XP 175; *MM*/131.

Wraiths (3): INT very; AL LE; AC 4; MV 12, fly 24 (B); HD 5+3; hp 36, 31, 27; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1–6; SA energy drain; SD hit only by silver or magical weapons, immune to *sleep* and *charm*; SZ M; ML 15; XP 2,000; *MM*/365.

Phendraax, former high priest: AL NE; AC –1; MV 12; P 11; hp 71; THAC0 14; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg by spell or 1–4/1–4; D 17, W 18; ML 20; XP 7,000. Spells: *cause light wounds** (×3), *curse**, *darkness** (×2), *protection from good**; *aid* (×2), *silence 15′ radius* (×3), *wyvern watch*; *animate dead*, *cause disease**, *cause paralysis**, *continual darkness**, *dispel magic*, *protection from fire*; *cause serious wounds**, *poison**, *protection from lightning*, *spell turning*; *cure critical wounds*, *slay living**; *blade barrier*; *chain mail +3*.

Extraplanar Level

This level of the temple of Maalpherus does not exist on the Prime Material Plane, but rather elsewhere in the multiverse. It was created by the founders of the temple as a meeting place where those who were truly worthy could receive personal instruction from their deity.

Maalpherus has not taken action against the illithid because this is merely a lesser temple and the situation amuses him slightly. If the PCs somehow have the ability to discern where they are, or if the DM deems it important, then the referee may choose an appropriate Lower Plane. An arbitrary North has been marked on the map for orientation.

Because of the location of this level, priests are unable to regain spells of third level or above, but they may cast spells they have already memorized. Likewise, any wizard or priest spells which conjure or summon creatures (i.e., *summon swarm*, *monster summoning*, *animal summoning*, etc.) do not function.

The rooms described below hang in a void of black nothingness. The floors are made of solid stone approximately 2′ thick, and the PCs may feel this thickness by reaching over the edge of the walkway. Since there are no intervening walls on this level except for those around rooms 37 and 38, the PCs

can see a great distance along and across pathways if a light source is present. The PCs may *levitate* or *fly* off of the paths here, but they find nothing in the vast expanse of emptiness. PCs who fall off the path for some reason or are off the path when the duration of a spell such as *fly* expires fall forever and are considered lost. The stone here cannot be permanently changed by any means short of a *wish*, but spells such as *passwall*, *rock to mud*, and *stone shape* still take effect (and perhaps have dire consequences for those on the path).

35. Pillars in the Void. PCs entering the mirror in the gate room (34) appear on the southern edge of this one. It appears much as does the gate room, but the pillars reach to a height of 40′ and hold up nothing.

There are no doors leading out of this room, nor any walls. The pillars and torches clinging to them are the only objects in this room. There appears to be no return path to room 34.

If the PCs wish to return to the Prime Material Plane, they first must wear or hold one of the amulets found in room 34 or in the chest of room 38. Then, the PC holding the amulet may simply walk off the southern edge of the room and exit the mirror in the gate room. If the amulet is not in the possession of anyone walking off the edge, the PCs fall and (unless somehow anchored) are considered lost as described above.

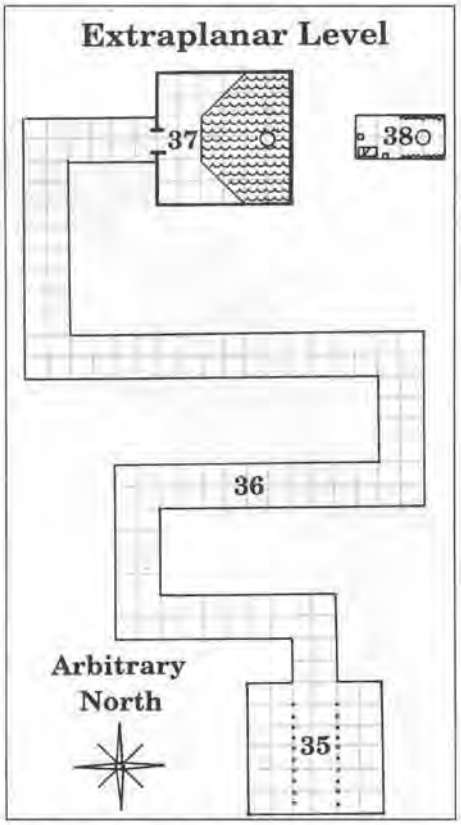
Anyone traveling through the gate causes the chime in room 38 to sound; thus, when the PCs arrive, the mind flayer is aware of the intrusion. The creature then uses its powers of *clairvoyance* and *clairaudience* to view and hear the PCs while they are here. As soon as possible, the illithid uses *psionic sense* to determine whether there are any PCs with psionic ability. It then *contacts* any PCs who do not have psionic abilities, but waits to engage in psionic combat with any who do. This *contact* is maintained until either the PCs leave this extradimensional level or the mind flayer defeats them in combat (or is itself defeated).

36. A Path through Darkness. This 20′-wide path meanders through the void and eventually reaches the lair of the rogue illithid. The PCs are able to see (as soon as their light sources are within range) the small building at the end of the walkway (room 37 and 38). Unlike the rest of this level, the building at the end of the walkway is just that: an actual construct with walls and a ceiling. The DM should describe this structure as soon as the PCs are within range. There are no creatures to encounter here, but the mind flayer may choose to use *telempathic projection* to cause fear in those PCs *contacted*. It does this to make the PCs as skittish as possible before they confront the "god" at the end of the path.

37. The Meeting. This building is 60′ square and stands 30′ high. A second level stands an additional 10′ high and stretches for the full length of the construct, though it is only 20′ wide. The entire outside of the building is carved with the leering visages of human and humanoid faces, and stone gargoyles sit at each corner of the roof. There are twin spires topping the building, one at either end (east and west) of the topmost level. The only entrance to the main building is a large, arched doorway at the end of the path (area 36). The room inside is not brightly lit, but the light spills out into the darkness of the void around.

The interior of the building is richly decorated with silver and gold. Ornamental wall hangings cover the walls from floor to ceiling in all but a few places where small gold statuettes sit in recesses in the walls. Dominating the eastern part of the room is a pool of water. The water is 10′ deep (requiring the bottom of the building in the void to be lower than the rest of the path) and has a small island of sorts at its center. The island is merely a stone pedestal which rises about three inches out of the water. The pedestal is approximately 2′ in diameter—enough room to support one man-sized creature. There is a 5′ diameter hole in the ceiling 30′ directly above this pedestal.

Two rounds after the PCs enter the building, the mind flayer descends from room 38 through the hole in the ceiling onto the pedestal using *levitation*. It wears flowing, hooded black silk robes which completely cover its head and hands, much like the robe worn by Maalpherus in the paintings that the PCs have seen. The creature also grasps a short rod in one hand. It



uses *false sensory input* to convince the PCs (at least those *contacted*) that the pool of water is actually a pool of corrosive acid (bubbling and giving off an acrid smell). The creature uses its innate *mindlink* ability to communicate with the PCs, addressing them as the incarnation of Maalpherus himself. *Awe* is used to further this deception.

First and foremost, the mind flayer wishes to determine which of the PCs holds the cure to the disease and its own malady. Its powers of *awe* and *ESP* may be used to glean this information. It then uses its powers of control to force the remedy from them, counting on the illusion of the pool of acid to keep the PCs at bay. Missile weapons can be (partially) deflected using *inertial barrier*, and energy spells can be negated by *energy containment*. The mind flayer retreats if its life is in danger (perhaps using *invisibility* and *levitation*), but its primary goal is still the recovery of the curative flask that the PCs carry.

Mind flayer: INT genius; AL LE; AC 5; MV 12; HD 8+4; hp 56; THAC0 11; #AT 4; Dmg 2 + special; SA mind blast, psionics (425 PSPs), infravision; MR 90%; SZ M; MR 16; XP 10,000;

MM/251; Psionics summary: level 16, attack/defense modes: EW, II, PC, PB/All, score = 19, Clairsentience: Sciences—*clairaudience, clairvoyance*, Psychokinesis: Sciences—*telekinesis*, Devotions—*control body, inertial barrier, levitation, molecular agitation*, Psychometabolism: Sciences—*energy containment*, Devotions—*body equilibrium, cause decay*", *cell adjustment, displacement*, Telepathy: Sciences—*domination, ejection, mass domination, mindlink*', Devotions—*awe, contact, ESP, false sensory input, inflict pain, invisibility, telempathic projection*, Metapsionics: Sciences—*empower*, Devotions—*psionic sense, receptacle*.

When the mind flayer was banished from its home, the *psychic surgery* performed on it did a number of things. Its captors wished to seal off the illithid's powers of psychoportation. At the same time, they wished to impart the powers of *clairvoyance* and *clairaudience* so that the rogue might be able to view the places he could no longer travel. The *surgery*, however, also had the unforeseen consequence of increasing the mind flayer's psionic potential, giving it great power. Its abilities in the psychometabolic devotion, usually very limited in the illithids, were also expanded, and it gained new metapsionic powers it never had before the surgery.

Its *mindlink* (marked with ') power is innate of all illithids and does not require *contact* or the expenditure of PSPs. *Cause decay* (marked with "), which does not normally affect organic tissue, has been modified and expanded to include living beings. Thus, the mind flayer can, in effect, *cause disease* through its psionic abilities.

It used these increased abilities to craft a type of permanent receptacle for stored psionic power (PSPs). This receptacle is the rod that it carries, and currently holds 200 PSPs. The psionicist holding the rod may tap into these PSPs whenever he or she wishes. These PSPs may be recharged simply by channeling the psionicist's PSPs into it (the metapsionic devotion *receptacle* is not needed). Any psionicist can use the PSPs currently stored within the rod, but when they are used, the psionicist can never personally recharge the rod to hold more PSPs than one-half his or her current psionic potential maximum.

38. The Cure. This 20' × 40' room has a relatively low ceiling (about 7' high) and is where the mind flayer lives while it waits for its cure to be brought to it by either the PCs (if they have won past its guards and traps) or by its servants (if the PCs have failed). The hole in the eastern portion of the room is positioned directly over the pedestal in room 37. The floor of this room is an intricate pattern of 1"-square tiles that form no particular picture. A pair of artistic tapestries hang on the north and south walls. The illithid's bed in the southwest corner of the room is covered with black silken sheets.

Just beside the bed is a pedestal and glass terrarium exactly like those in room 25. This terrarium has no trap, as the illithid considers it impossible for any creature but itself to enter this chamber (as it would have to be defeated otherwise). Inside are the curative mushrooms the PCs seek. Suspended in mid-air above the terrarium is a thin silver chime that sounds when the gate between rooms 34 and 35 is used.

There is a small footlocker at the end of the bed that contains the mind flayer's personal belongings and treasure (at least that small amount of treasure that it has accumulated since it was exiled). The footlocker (which is unlocked) contains 200 pp, a ruby (500 gp), two opals (150 gp), an extra silk

robe like the one worn by the illithid (100 gp), two *potions of healing*, a *potion of super-heroism*, *oil of impact*, a scroll of three wizard spells: *knock*, *fly*, *dimension door*, a *scroll of protection from wraiths*, and a map detailing a great amount of the local tunnels of the Underdark (though the city of the illithids is not marked). It also holds three amulets like those in room 34 that are necessary for transportation back to the Prime Material Plane.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs defeat the mind flayer and add a few pinches of the true mushroom to the healing potion, the cure is complete. They can then return to the capital city of Kovrent and give the cure to the kingdom's healers. The wizards and priests of the kingdom are then able to duplicate the sample of the complete cure, and the PCs have the gratitude of the king. If they require a reward, the king gladly pays it (if it is within his power to do so). The DM should then devise a reward suitable to the current campaign.

If the PCs fail in their task (but still survive) and the mind flayer obtains the flask with the cure, the creature forgets about them and sets about opening the flask, once it uncovers the command words. If this occurs, it consumes the potion which does, in fact, heal it after a period of 12 hours. If the PCs do not corner and defeat the illithid within that time, it uses its regained psionic powers of psychoportation and returns to its own kind to begin a new (and likely more successful) revolution with its increased psionic abilities. This opens opportunities for later adventures involving the races of the Underdark if the DM wishes.

If the PCs fail to stop the mind flayer and lose the cure, all is not lost. They can still return to Kovrent to obtain a new potion and begin again. Likely, a return to the temple of Maalpherus will meet with little resistance as most of the temple's defenders have been eliminated. The mushrooms required for the cure will still be present, and the cure will save the lives of the people of Kovrent (though many will have perished). The king is still indebted to the party, though he mourns the loss of so many of his people. Ω

MAP SYMBOLS

These symbols are used on most maps in DUNGEON® Adventures.

DOOR

DOUBLE DOOR

SECRET DOOR

LOCKED DOOR

WIZARD-LOCKED DOOR

CONCEALED DOOR

BARRED DOOR

PORTCULLIS OR BARS

WINDOW

ARROW SLIT

FIREPLACE

COVERED PIT

OPEN PIT

FOUNTAIN

SPIRAL STAIRS

STATUE

STAIRS

TRAP DOOR IN CEILING

TRAP DOOR IN FLOOR

SECRET TRAP DOOR

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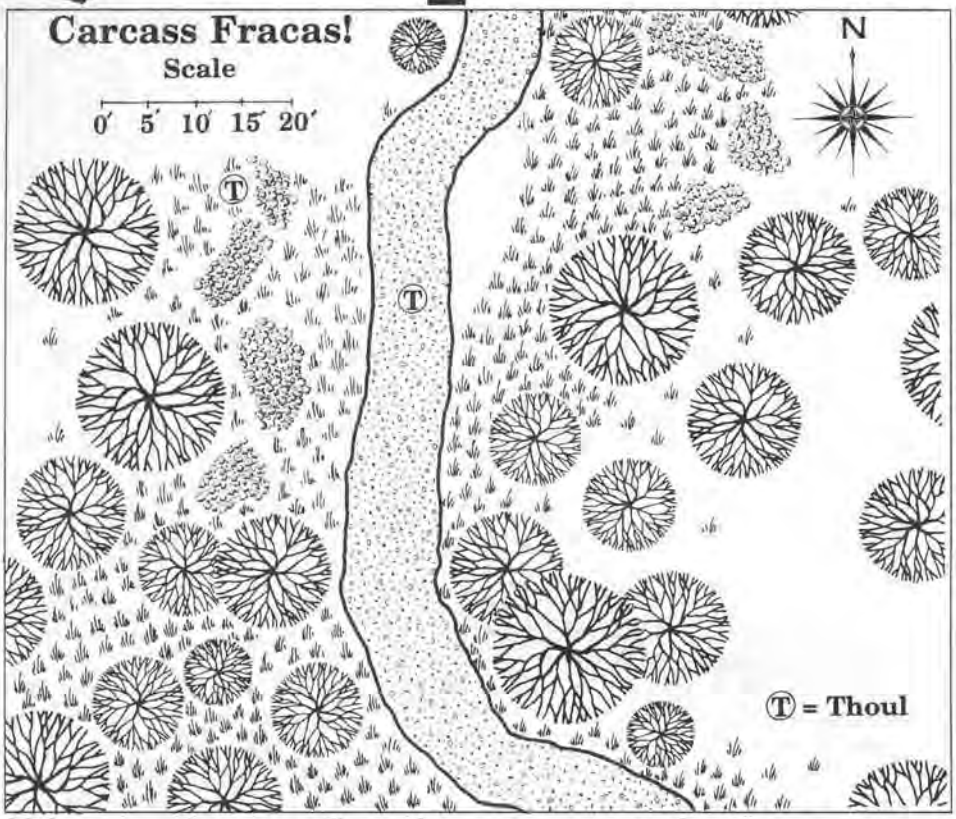
Side Treks



It's only a flesh wound

BY STEPHEN J. SMITH

"Carcass Fracas!" is an AD&D® SideTrek scenario designed for a party of 4–6 1st-level PCs. It is set in the MYSTARA® game world simply because the featured monster—the thoul—is detailed in the MYSTARA MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Appendix. DMs willing to import the thoul to other game worlds should have no difficulty converting this brief encounter.

This adventure can also be used with the D&D® game system. Since 1st-level PCs in the D&D game often have fewer hit points and spells at their disposal than do their AD&D game counterparts, the DM can adjust this scenario slightly to give the heroes a better chance. A party that includes two or three 2nd level heroes or a number of magical weapons should be sufficient to give the two thouls in this scenario a good fight. If the heroes are all 1st-level, however, the DM might want to lower the hp totals of the thouls or perhaps remove the second thoul from the picture entirely, while giving the first creature maximum hp (24).

DMs running a campaign in the *KARAMEIKOS™: Kingdom of Adventure* setting can use this encounter in the Barony of Halag (formerly the Black Eagle Barony) where many humanoid minions of the deposed Baron Ludwig von Hendriks still roam free. DMs using the *GLANTRI™: Kingdom of Magic* setting might run this scenario near the towns of Eriadna (near the humanoid-ruled Principality of New Kolland) or Trintan (just north of the monster-infested wastes known as the Broken Lands). If the DM sets this piece elsewhere, there are two considerations to keep in mind. First, this mini-adventure takes place in an area where hobgoblin and human raiders could logically be encountered. Second, the action occurs near a town or village where the PCs can receive advance warning about raiders in the neighboring countryside. This scenario relies upon turning PC expectations upside-down, so it is imperative that the party hear of hobgoblin and brigand activity in the area before having this encounter.

Beginning the Adventure

The heroes may meet a merchant or traveler along the trail who delivers the raider warning. Regardless of who gives it, the warning should be similar to this:

> "You folks stay alert. There's been all sorts of trouble along the trail lately. Brigands and highwaymen have been attacking and robbing travelers for the last six months. And as if that's not bad enough, now there are reports of hobgoblin raiders killing folk or capturing them for slaves. Two days back a traveler named Jake Wheezler came through, swearing he saw a dragon sailing overhead, following the road. But I wouldn't put much credence in that tale. Judging by his breath, I'd say the old fellow had tipped a few bottles of dwarf spirits and couldn't see three feet past his nose!"

The speaker can't give the heroes any more information about the brigands or hobgoblins, though he can (and should) give them a description of hobgoblins if the PCs have never encountered these monsters before. ("They're big, mean, nasty brutes with ruddy skin and all sorts of cruel weapons.") If the PCs ask what color Jake Wheezler's dragon was, the speaker smiles, winks, and says, "Pink, most likely!" Jake's dragon was indeed a drunken hallucination which plays no other part in this scenario except to function as a red herring.

Cantankerous Cadaver

When the PCs are ready for the encounter, read or paraphrase the following:

CARCASS FRACAS!

Rounding a turn in the road, you spy a large humanoid figure lying face-down in the middle of the trail. The figure wears leather armor of some kind, but this protective layer did the unfortunate being little good: a pair of arrows are sunk deeply into its back.

The PCs are assumed to be about 30 yards from the fallen figure at the start of the encounter. When they move within 20', they can see more details.

The fallen creature is not human. It appears to be about half a foot taller than an average man. Its rust-colored arms are knotted with muscles, and its hairy mane is dirty orange. You see no sign of weapons on or near the body; either the creature was unarmed or whoever loaded its back with arrows claimed its belongings as plunder.

PCs who have approached the body may make successful Wisdom checks to spy what appears to be a small leather sack sticking out from beneath the body. The heroes may try to claim this prize, but they won't get it without a fight.

For The Dungeon Master

Although the body lying before the heroes matches the description of a hobgoblin, this wily fellow isn't one. And although the arrows protruding from his back are real, the monster is far from dead.

The fallen creature isn't a dead hobgoblin but a living thoul. A thoul is a magical combination of hobgoblin, ghoul, and troll. Its appearance is usually derived from its hobgoblin stock (though some have the greenish skin and long noses common to trolls). Like a ghoul, a thoul can paralyze non-elves by touch for 1d6+2 rounds if the victim fails a saving throw vs. paralyzation; however, a thoul is not undead.

A thoul's trollish blood grants it limited regeneration. As long as the thoul has at least 1 hit point remaining at the end of a combat round, it regenerates 1 hp of damage. When the creature is reduced to 0 hp or below, its regenerative powers fail and it dies. Unlike a troll, a thoul can regenerate fire- and acid-based damage.

The thoul lying before the PCs recently survived a run-in with human brigands. While scrambling through a rocky ravine, the thoul was surprised by the raiders who were traveling along the ridge overhead. The thoul made a dash for the woods at the end of the ravine, suffering two arrow hits in the back as he fled. Fearing he wouldn't reach the cover of the woods before taking a fatal shot, the thoul opted to collapse and play dead. The beast hoped to regenerate as the humans approached to confirm their kill, then surprise them.

The thoul's desperate plan worked better than expected. The brigands were en route to rendezvous with another group of their outlaw band, and the leader sent two of his men to loot the body of the "dead hobgoblin" while the remainder moved on. By the time these two unfortunates had scrambled into the ravine, the thoul's injuries had healed considerably, and the "dead" monster's savage attack took them completely by surprise. One man managed a short cry of terror before the thoul's claw ripped across his throat. But when the main force of brigands returned to the ravine, it was too late: they saw no sign of the "dead hobgoblin," only the badly mauled bodies of their two comrades.

The thoul crept back to his mate and told her what had transpired. The she-thoul offered to pull the arrows out of his back, but the crafty creature told her to leave them. The beginnings of a plan were forming in his wicked mind. He thought, "Why chase your prey when you can make your prey come to you?"

The pair of thouls now obtain many of their meals by having the male lie face-down along a trail or road with the arrows protruding from his back. When travelers stop to examine the "monster corpse," he leaps to the attack while the female emerges from hiding to join the fray.

The possum-playing thoul (17 hp) waits until someone moves within easy striking distance (5' or so), then he attacks, slashing at his victim(s) with his razor-sharp claws. After this initial attack, the thoul's mate (13 hp) emerges from the bushes on the western side of the trail (see the map) and peppers the PCs with arrows. This thoul isn't bright enough to distinguish likely spellcasters at the start of combat, but once she witnesses wizards or priests casting spells, she concentrates her attacks on them.

Thouls (2): INT low; AL LE; AC 6; MV 12; HD 3; hp 17, 13; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 1–3 each (claws) or 1–6 each (arrows); SA paralyzation; SD regeneration; SZ M; ML 15; XP 270; MYSTARA MC Appendix/111.

If the thouls fail a morale check, they attempt to flee, taking their coin sack with them. Should the heroes give chase, the DM should remember to keep a careful record of the length of pursuit, for the thouls will be regenerating as they run. Once their wounds are fully healed, they'll turn on their pursuers and battle anew.

If the PCs defeat the thouls, they may claim the monsters' sack. This bag contains 27gp, 11 ep, 43 sp, 47 cp, a pair of plain silver rings (worth 25 gp each), a *dirk +1* (used as a toothpick by the creatures), and a pair of giant centipedes (snacks picked up earlier in the day). One of these bugs is dead, but the second still has 1 hp remaining. It was only paralyzed when captured by the thouls, and now it is very angry, attacking whoever opens the sack.

Giant centipede: INT non-; AL N; AC 9; MV 15; HD 2 hp (1 remaining); THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg nil; SA poison; SD nil; MR nil; SZ T; ML 7; XP 35; *MM*/42.

The centipede's bite delivers a toxin that can paralyze its victim for 2d6 hours if a saving throw vs. poison (with a +4 bonus) is failed. It suffers a –1 penalty to all saving throws. Ω

THE ROSE OF JUMLAT

BY JEROEN GRASDYK

By any other name

Artwork by James Holloway

Jeroen Writes: "Although I was born in the Netherlands, I've moved around most of the globe, rarely staying in one place for more than two years. I've lived in Holland, England, India, and the U.S. I was introduced to the D&D® game in the States when I was 12 years old, and I've been happily playing and DMing ever since. Along the way, I acquired a degree in Mechanical Engineering and did my replacement military service as a conscientious objector."

"The Rose of Jumlat" is an AL-QADIM® adventure for a group of 3 or more PCs of levels 3–7 (about 22 levels total). A well-balanced party of good or neutrally aligned characters works best. The party should contain at least one thief, and a sha'ir would be useful. A certain amount of brawn will also come in handy. Any PCs of high station should be strangers to the city of Jumlat, not natives.

To get the most out of this adventure, you should have access to the *Arabian Adventures* book. Any of the character kits described there can be used. *The Land of Fate* boxed set and the AL-QADIM MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Appendix (MC13) are not necessary but provide useful background information. Any DM with an Arabian culture in his campaign should be able to adapt this adventure with a little effort. In Zhakara, gold pieces are called "dinars," silver pieces "dirham," and copper pieces "bits."

Adventure Background

Some years ago there lived among the Shafira al-Badia (desert dwellers) of the House of Thawr a young boy called Kamal. One morning he was witness to the selling of sheep by another member of the tribe, a young man named Achbar ibn Akbar, to some traveling al-Hadhar (city dwellers). Kamal told his father Mustafa of this, and Mustafa denounced Achbar to the tribe. Achbar was publicly flogged for his crime, and then he swore revenge against Kamal and Mustafa.

The next morning, Mustafa was found dead by the tribe's waterhole. The poisoning of the waterhole was traced to Achbar. For this heinous crime he was to be executed at sunset, but at dusk the tent which should have held him was empty.

Bereft of water, the tribe disbanded. Kamal left to find his fortune among the Cities of the Pearl, as many young al-Badia did at the time.

Forty-eight years have passed. Kamal ibn Mustafa, now a successful merchant, lives in Jumlat and has a beautiful daughter by the name of Samia. In the upper social circles of the city, she is known as "the Rose of Jumlat."

Unfortunately, Samia caught the eye of Agat amir-Doth at a feast several weeks ago. Amir-Doth is the chief vizier of Jumlat's sultan, and he has a notorious taste for young maidens and an equally notorious lack of scruples (see the *Land of Fate* boxed set, page 89 of the "Adventurer's Guide"). Amir-Doth's attentions placed Kamal in a quandary when he heard of it from a friend, because the vizier's methods of "persuasion" placed the whole family in danger.

For the Dungeon Master

Kamal quickly finalized Samia's marriage to a merchant who lives in Gana. He is most anxious to see that Samia is sent off to Gana soon, but the timing could hardly be worse, as the season of rains approaches, and the caravans have stopped traveling. The solution was to arrange for a special caravan.

But news of such things gets around, and one of Amir-Doth's spies would be bound to hear of it, so Kamal decided on a little subterfuge. Not wanting to start his daughter's marriage with a lie, a most ill-omened thing to do, he let it be known that he would donate a famous jewel to the Mosque of Selan the Gracious in Gana. And here is the heart of Kamal's plan: the gem in question is a large ruby carved in the shape of a rose. It is a gem of almost supernatural beauty, infamous for its deadly curse. It, too, bears the name, "the Rose of Jumlat," and it features in several legends.

This is how Kamal can say without lying that the small caravan he is organizing is intended to take the Rose of Jumlat to Gana. As long as he doesn't say it to a member of the Sultan's court, no one will be the wiser. The jewel's curse should deter any robbers.

The elderly Kamal's health is too poor to allow him to make the journey to Gana himself, so he placed the caravan under the supervision of his eldest son, Omar, with the strict instructions that both of the Roses are to be delivered to the Mosque of Selan in Gana, one to be married, the other to be locked away in the Mosque's vault.

Several small merchants joined Kamal in the venture, seeing profit in a journey at an unconventional time. There is, however, a small problem with the caravan guards, as few of them are willing to take the risk of traveling so late in the season. Placards are hung up around the city, proclaiming the caravan's need for guards. This is where the PCs come in. At first sight it seems a fairly straightforward job, escorting a cursed jewel across the desert. But there are some complications . . .

The Genie

The jewel rose was carved long ago by Iago the Proud (see sidebar) as one of his great masterworks. Although it is not a true genie prison, the jewel is occupied by a genie, caught by its great beauty. Emambo, an efreet and compulsive gambler, needs to be near the jewel to bask in the glow of its perfection, so he made it his home. This has given the jewel its cursed reputation.

Emambo does not feel at peace within his jewel, despite its unblemished beauty, and he longs to return to his home in the Elemental Plane of Fire. He has managed to bend a small-time peddler and con-man named Essafah ibn Waqar to his will and can communicate telepathically with him.

Unfortunately, Essafah is a snivelling, cowardly excuse for a thief, and he cannot bring himself to steal the jewel—and he whines, to boot. Still, one must make do with what Fate provides. Emambo sees definite possibilities in this sudden desert journey and has "persuaded" Essafah to join the caravan.

The Sea Mage

Kamal's old enemy Achbar ibn Akbar still lives. He has become a Sea Mage of considerable power and has good relations with a group of corsairs, functioning as a joint leader of the group. Deep within his heart, though, he keeps a potent hatred of Kamal ibn Mustafa. He has had several attempts made on Kamal's life, so far without success.

From old books of lore he learned of the jewel rose's true nature and its occupant, and lately he heard of its movement across the desert as part of Kamal's caravan. Achbar plans to assault the caravan with his corsairs and take the jewel, later to release the genie and command it to bring Kamal to him. The irony of using Kamal's property to kill Kamal is very appealing. Achbar will, of course, be very happy to discover the presence of Kamal's daughter—it brings a whole new dimension to his revenge!

The Kada

When Mustafa died he left behind a kada, a shade of himself embodying his hatred of Achbar. Mustafa's spirit is gone; what is left is a mere shadow, empowered by hate and the magic of the desert. (See the sidebar on page 35 for a complete description of the kada and its powers.) The goal of this shade is the death of Achbar ibn Akbar. Because the kada is a thing of illusion

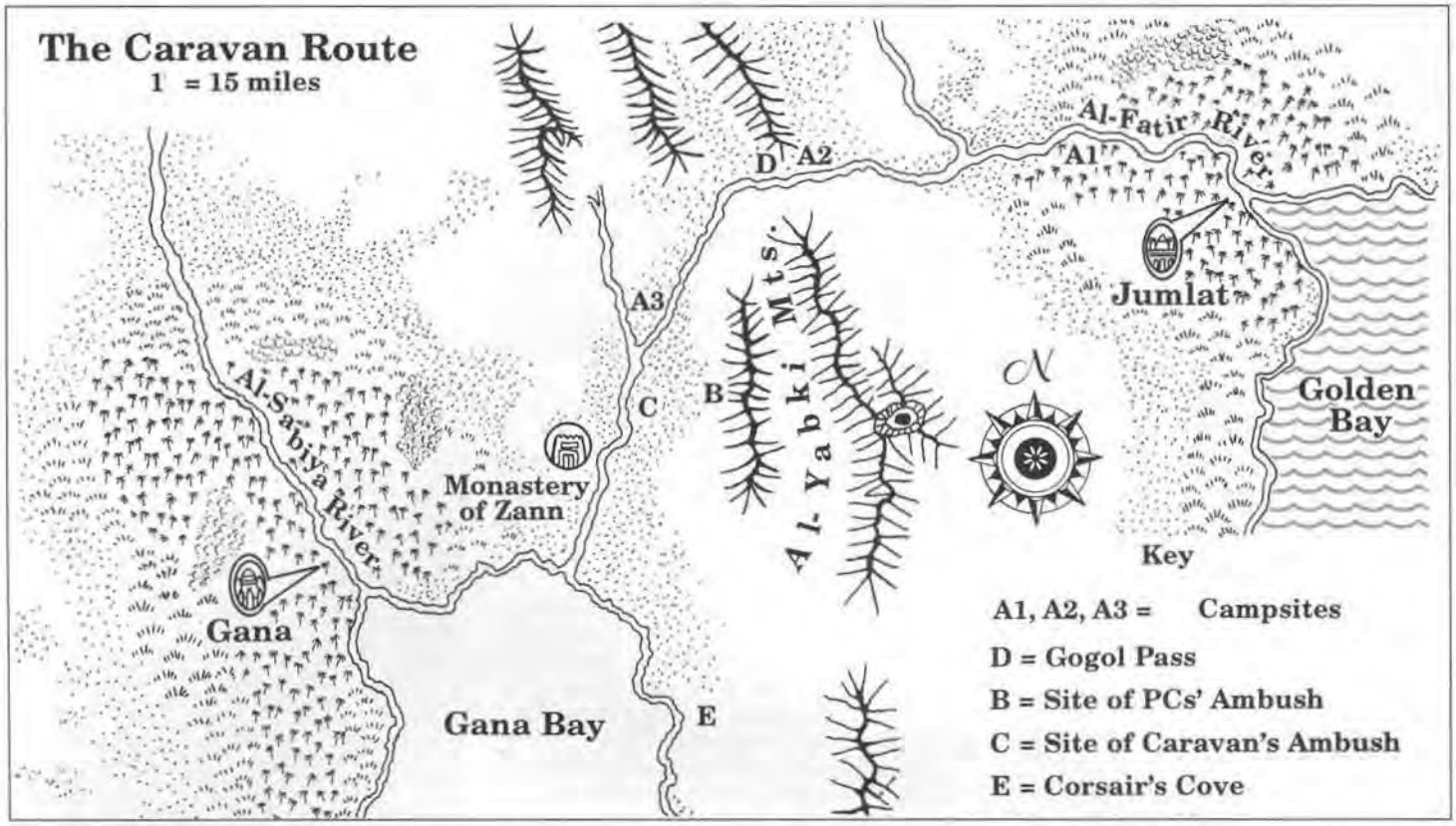
The Legend of Iago the Proud

Once there lived a man who was smiled upon by Fate. He was handsome, he was born to a wealthy family, and he had a loving wife and many children. But his greatest gift was his skill with his hands. In sculpture he became the greatest of masters, in smithing unsurpassed, in weaving unequalled. Seven great crafts he mastered. After mastering the seventh, he believed himself to be the greatest craftsman who had ever lived.

Then he set out to create seven great masterworks, which would assure that his name would be known through the ages. One example of each craft he made, and none could look upon them without being awed. In his pride, Iago had them displayed in a pavilion, where all who came could look upon them.

The following morning, as he sat in his studio contemplating his next great work, he was shown a vision by the goddess Selan the Beautiful, chiding him for his pride and laying a great doom on him: he would not rest until all of his seven great works had found their final destiny. Many people visited the building that day, but toward sunset the crowd turned ugly. The pavilion was burned and looted, and Iago himself disappeared without trace.

Hear this, and beware of pride. We have no fate but the fate we are given.



and death, its powers are limited—it can animate only dry sand.

The kada senses Achbar's location, as well as Samia's, as they journey across the desert. The kada cannot travel under its own power, and so it is likely to seek help from the PCs in fulfilling its geas.

Player Introduction

The PCs start the adventure in the city of Jumlat, and the season should be late autumn. How the PCs arrive is of little consequence to the adventure. Read or paraphrase the following:

> You wake to the call of the muezzin. It is a beautiful morning in the city of Jumlat, with golden light spilling across the walls of the houses. After washing and the morning prayer, you feel ready for some breakfast.
>
> Descending the stairs, you pass through the curtained arch to join the other occupants of the inn at breakfast. Soon you are all enjoying your bread, cheese, and dates. As the innkeeper prepares to serve the coffee, a commotion starts outside the house. Voices are raised in surprise.

> Outside you see a cluster of merchants, dock workers, and other folk standing around a sheet of parchment nailed to the wall. You get closer until you can read the heading: "CARAVAN GUARDS WANTED to travel to Gana with the munificent and most generous Dalmud; the purpose of the caravan being to escort the Rose of Jumlat to the Mosque of Selan in that city. Remuneration will be excellent; those wishing to join should gather at the Caravanserai of the Red Bull by the third hour of the morning."

If the PCs do not join the caravan, the adventure ends here. The caravan never arrives in Gana, and several weeks later a wealthy merchant named Kamal ibn Mustafa disappears.

If the PCs decide to join, they can find the caravanserai quite easily, as it is well known. If the PCs ask about Dalmud, they find that he is a well-respected and experienced caravan master, who had supposedly retired last year. Enquiries about the Rose of Jumlat gain the answer that it is a cursed jewel in the shape of a rose the size of a baby's fist.

As the PCs walk through the city, describe the narrow alleys and high buildings, the small, already crowded bazaars near the inn, and the large roofed suq near the caravanserai. Jumlat is a bustling, busy place, and it is not called the City of Multitudes for nothing.

As the PCs approach the caravanserai, read or paraphrase the following:

> The Caravanserai of the Red Bull borders on the West Gate Bazaar, which has at its center a large fountain spilling a trickle of water into a basin. Beggars gather around the water, and as you approach the caravanserai, one of the beggars turns to you with a begging bowl. His intense blue eyes glint in the sun as he says, "*Sadaqa, min fadlak*?"

If the PCs give him any money or gift, he says, "Such generosity should be rewarded," and takes a parchment covered with strange writing from his ragged aba, which he presses into the hands of the most generous PC.

If the PCs give him nothing, the beggar tries to sell them the parch-

ment for a dinar. If the PCs do not buy the parchment, the beggar sells it to another person in the caravan. In either case, the beggar moves away as soon as the transaction is completed. Even if the PCs give chase, they cannot find him again in the busy crowds.

The parchment is quite old, and it is written in an ancient script. The parchment has a permanent *confuse languages* effect on it so that it cannot be translated magically. If a PC has the Ancient Languages proficiency, a check at –10 is needed to translate it.

To his Incandescence Batomo:

In my humble library, a clue suggests that your cousin, Emambo the Chancy, has made an earthly jewel his home.

Ever your faithful servant,
Rasu al-Huzuzi

If the PCs fail to translate the parchment, there is an opportunity later in the adventure to have it translated.

At the caravanserai, a few guards already stand in a group by the entrance, and a chaotic swirl of people, camels, provisions, and merchandise indicates that the caravan is preparing to leave. An old man, large and strong with a graying beard, seems to be directing the work. A dwarf walks toward the PCs as they take in the riotous scene.

The dwarf is Anwar, the caravan master's assistant. He greets the PCs with the traditional "*Es salam alekum*" and courteously inquires about their business.

Anwar: AL LN; AC 7; MV 6; F3 (askar); hp 16; THAC0 18; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; ML 13; studded leather armor, short sword (specialized).

When Anwar hears that the PCs wish to become guards for the caravan, he looks them over and takes them to the graybeard directing the assembly of the caravan. Anwar introduces this man as Dalmud, the famous caravan master.

Dalmud offers the PCs 100 dinars each for the journey, though he can be bargained up somewhat. Dalmud can spend 2,000 dinars for guards, and he has already spent 700 dinars. Keep in mind that the reply to the notices has not exactly been overwhelming, and that Dalmud realizes that spellcasters are hard to come by.

Dalmud: AL LG; AC 6; MV 12; F5 (desert rider); hp 27; THAC0 16; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; C 15, D 15, W 16; ML 15; *leather armor +1, scimitar +1* (specialized), short bow (20 arrows).

Outside Omar's party, only Dalmud knows the caravan's true purpose. If the PCs ask to see the jewel rose, they are told to wait until the caravan has reached the desert.

The caravan departs at noon, and if the PCs need to collect their equipment from their inn, someone must do this immediately. Any low-station PCs are expected to help with loading the caravan, just like any other guard. Everybody is busy, and there is little opportunity to talk to the other people traveling with the caravan at this point.

PCs who pay attention see an old, dusty woman (Samia wearing the *veil of desert dryness*) getting into the palanquin containing the jewel rose. This woman is accompanied by a group of men, including Dalmud and Omar—and Kamal, who, as the organizer, is there to see the caravan off. Omar mounts his camel immediately after Samia enters the palanquin, and any al-Badia PC, or any PC with the camel riding proficiency, notices that Omar rides in the al-Badian style, which is odd for a (supposed) city dweller.

When the caravan is ready, a priest says a short prayer to Hajama the Courageous, evoking his blessing. The caravan master then gives the signal to start the journey, and the caravan departs, through the West Gate of the city, and out into the river valley.

The Journey

While moving, the caravan is arranged with Dalmud at the front, with the palanquin surrounded by Omar and his guards immediately behind him. The camels carrying Samia's dowry follow behind. Then come the merchants, Djuhah al-Turabi, Essafah ibn Waqar al-Bakri, and the others.

The PCs are asked to guard one side of the caravan, while Anwar and five mercenaries take the other side. The remaining two mercenaries watch the rear.

Mercenaries (7): AL varies; AC 7; MV 12; F1 (mercenary barbarian); hp 6 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 12; leather armor, small shield, spear, dagger, pouch (2–12 dinars, 4–16 dirhams each).

The *Veil of Desert Dryness*

This is a curious magical item which was created quite by accident. A sand mage's attempt to make a *veil of disguise* (an item similar to a *hat of disguise*) went wrong, resulting in the veil absorbing some of the desert's dry dustiness.

Instead of giving the wearer a choice of illusionary disguises, the *veil* magically transforms the person wearing it, changing him to look as he would after years of exposure to the desert: wrinkled, dusty, and old (in most cases). The effect is 12th level and lasts as long as the veil is worn. If the *veil* ever falls into the sea, it is destroyed.

The goods-carrying camels are kept near the center of the caravan, with their masters in front of them (in order to avoid the dust). The spare mounts are in a group near the rear of the caravan. Because of the journey's short length, few spare mounts were taken: only one for every two riders.

The first part of the journey parallels the Nahr al-Fatir, the Fetid River. A good road runs along the river, and the caravan follows it through the terraced and irrigated farmlands. During this part of the trek, the PCs have the opportunity to talk with the other people traveling in the caravan. Many of them are 0-level humans and share the following general statistics.

Caravan Members: AL varies; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level; hp varies; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 10.

Omar is a tall, thin man, still young and vigorous. He takes his duty to see his sister safely to Gana seriously, and he is impatient to finish so that he can go back to his comfortable home and family in Jumlat. Omar, though a perfectly pleasant man, is lacking in humor and feels much more at home behind a desk than on a camel.

Omar ibn Kamal: AL NG; AC 10; MV 12; T4 (merchant-rogue); hp 15; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 8; jambiya, pouch (25 dinars, 36 dirham). He keeps a separate bag with 750 dinars in his luggage, for emergency expenses.

Assisting Omar are four guards, loyal retainers of the family. They have orders not to let anyone near the palanquin, and at least one of them stays

Desert Random Encounters

Because the early part of the journey takes place during the dry season, food is scarce, and creatures which are usually timid might attack the caravan. Check for random encounters at dawn, afternoon, and dusk, with a 1 in 8 chance of an encounter.

Roll d20:

1–2: Djinn (1): INT average; AL CG; AC 4; MV 9, fly 24 (A); HD 7+3; hp 32; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 2–16; SA see below; SD air based attacks at –1 to hit and damage, +4 on saves vs. air-based magic; MR nil; SZ L (10′ tall); ML 13; XP 6,000; *Land of Fate* boxed set.

The djinn can use the following once per day as a 20th-level caster: *create nutritious food*, *create water or wine*, *create soft goods*, *create illusion*, *become invisible*, *assume gaseous form*, *wind walk*, form a *whirlwind*.

This genie is playful and likes to play tricks on earthbound mortals. Let your imagination run wild!

3–5: Ogres (2): INT low; AL CE; AC 5; MV 9; HD 4+1; hp 23, 19; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1–10; MR nil; SZ L (9′ tall); ML 14; XP 175; *MM*/272.

These two ogres are unenlightened and very hungry. They make a living from ambushing unsuspecting travelers and might take on the caravan in a hit-and-run attack. The bigger ogre has a large sack containing 233 dinars, 430 dirham, and a number of glittering rocks (one is an uncut topaz, worth 250 dinars).

6–11: Giant Vultures (2–7): INT animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 3 fly 24 (D); HD 2+2; hp 13; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1–4; MR nil; SZ M; ML 11; XP 120; *MM*/27.

The vultures are airborne when encountered. These vultures are a hungry bunch; they follow the caravan for the better part of a day, and any stragglers are definitely attacked. You might want to present this as an omen—just to unsettle the PCs a bit.

12–14: Lions (1–2): INT semi-; AL N; AC 6; MV 12; HD 5+2; hp 26; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1–4/1–4/1–10; SA if both paws hit, rear claws rake for 2–7 each; MR nil; SZ M; ML 10; XP 650; *MM*/36.

These are hunting females, ranging far from the rest of the pride.

16–18: Giant Poisonous Snakes (1–2): INT animal; AL N; AC 5; MV 15; HD 4+2; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1–3; SA poison; MR nil; SZ M (12′ long); ML 13; XP 420; *MM*/320.

19–20: Manticore: INT low; AL LE; AC 4; MV 12, fly 18 (E); HD 6+3; hp 39; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1–3/1–3/1–8; SA tail spikes (treat each spike as light crossbow bolt); MR nil; SZ H (15′ long); ML 15; XP 975; *MM*/246.

The manticore is be airborne when encountered and attacks the rear of the caravan, trying to kill one or more camels for food. It attacks with a volley of 1–6 tail spikes first, then soars in to attack with its claws, using a second volley later. If it brings anything down, it waits to eat until the caravan has moved away.

near it at all times. Two of the guards are elves.

Guards (4): AL LN; AC 7; MV 12; F2 (askar); hp 15, 12, 7, 6; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 13; leather armor, daraq, scimitar, jambiya.

Riding beside the palanquin is **Tagu** (0-level, AL CG, hp 4), Samia's page. He is a young servant boy, inquisitive and quite bright. He also has the potential to become a mage. If Samia wants anything while the caravan is moving, it is his job to get it for her.

Samia (0-level, AL NG, hp 4) is a beautiful young girl with fiery red hair—and a temper to match. She can be patient when she wants, but she is not used to being thwarted. She is not at all sure about marrying some distant Ganese merchant, but at the moment she does not have much choice. She uses the *veil of desert dryness* to move freely around the caravan camp, but she is always accompanied by at least one guard.

The most significant merchant traveling in the caravan is **Essafah ibn Waqar al-Bakri** (0-level, AL CE, hp 7), a human peddler. Essafah is the agent of Emambo the Chancy, the genie trapped in the jewel, and he is not very courageous. In fact, he is downright cowardly and absolutely hates being with the caravan. He whines and complain to anybody who listens while he tries to nerve himself to attempt stealing the jewel rose. But while being a trader is only a front for him, he is not averse to a quick profit, so he has loaded his two camels heavily with goods. To help him in getting Emambo back to his home, Essafah has acquired three potions: *glibness*, *gaseous form*, and *healing*. Because of his telepathic link with Emambo, Essafah is always aware of the jewel rose's location in terms of direction and approximate distance.

Djuhah al-Turabi (0-level, AL LN, hp 6) is a fat, clever merchant from Turab, and a longtime rival of Kamal. He believes that this entire business with the jewel is merely a ruse (as indeed it is), but with the purpose of moving a caravan safely across the desert late in the season to make a huge profit in Gana. He wants to be in on whatever his rival is doing, so he brought two servants and six camels heavily laden with high quality goods. Throughout the journey he gloats and heckles Omar, trying to get him to reveal the "true" reason for the caravan.

One of Farid's servants is Fahtan ibn Nabil, a troublemaker, gambler, and drinker who has been at odds with his master for some time now. He is too clever to do anything directly provoking, however, and this is how he interacts with the other caravaneers—stirring up trouble, but not doing anything directly himself.

Fahtan ibn Nabil: AL CE; AC 6; MV 12; T2 (sa'luk); hp 8; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; D 16; PP 15%; OL 35%; F/RT 25%; MS 30%; HS 30%; DN 15%; CW 60%; BS ×2; ML 10; XP 120; leather armor (worn under his aba), jambiya, sling (4 stones), pouch (thieves' picks, 13 dinars, 7 dirham).

You are welcome to round out the caravan's other merchants as required.

By the end of the day on which the caravan left Jumlat, the desert is in sight. The caravan camps near a small Jumlati border station and makes use of its well.

On the second day, the caravan moves into the desert. From this point onward, random monster encounters may occur. (See the Desert Random

Encounters sidebar.) It is nearly winter, and the heat is bearable during the day, but it is very cold at night. Because the rains are coming, the caravan travels through the day, stopping only once for prayer. At the end of the second day, the caravan arrives at the foot of the Gogol Pass, which leads through the al-Yabki mountains (the Mountains of Tears).

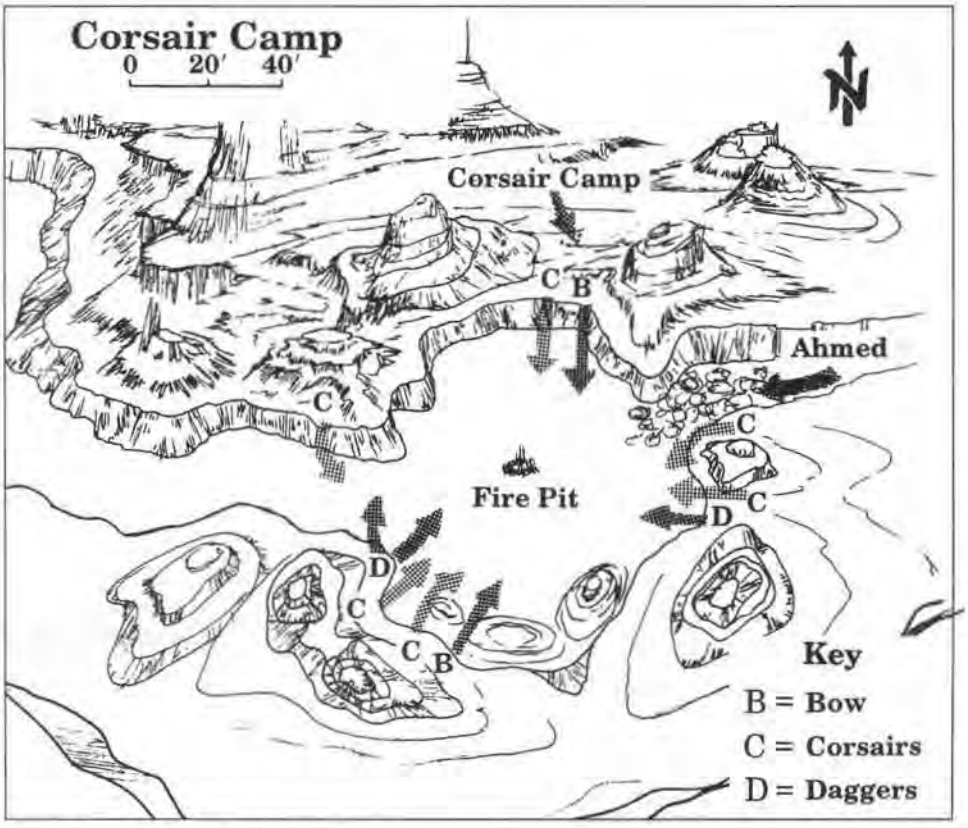
The caravan camps near a small sinkhole in the foothills which still contains a little water. A few thorny desert bushes grow around its edges. Random monster encounters are likely here, with a 1-in-4 chance of a dusk encounter instead of 1-in-8.

After the caravan has set up camp, dinner is cooked, and the caravaneers wash themselves in the al-Badian style, with sand. After eating, various small groups form according to station and inclination, including a group of mercenaries telling tall tales (which eventually erupts into a series of wrestling matches), a group of drivers and servants (and Essafah) who are dicing, and a group containing the merchants and the caravan master.

Two hours after sunset, Dalmud sounds a small gong for the evening prayers. At this time Samia comes out of the palanquin to say her prayers. She wears a chador (an all-obscuring Zhakaran garment) but not the *veil*, and the PCs might catch some glimpses of hands and eyes that are much too young to belong to the old woman traveling in the palanquin. The idea here is to give the PCs some indication that all is not as it seems. Don't make it too obvious, or you'll give the game away too early.

If the PCs asked to see the jewel rose, Omar comes to them after the evening prayer and takes them to where the palanquin sits in a tent. When Omar draws aside the palanquin's curtain, all of the PCs must make a saving throw vs. spells or be entranced by the jewel's beauty for 1–10 rounds (this affect occurs only once per PC). When they snap out of it, the PCs see Omar watching sardonically. He explains that many of the events ascribed to the mysterious curse arose out of simple greed. The ruby rose is worth 10,000 dinars for materials and workmanship.

Within the jewel rose, Emambo's powers are very limited: he can only *produce flame* or use *pyrotechnics* (at will). To avoid betraying his presence, Emambo does not use any obvious powers, as anybody threatening the jewel



could force him to do their bidding, even to the extent of getting him to leave the jewel and perform menial "tasks." He might take the risk of interfering in any dice games near the jewel, though, perhaps upsetting them by use of *produce fire*. Emambo does not grant wishes.

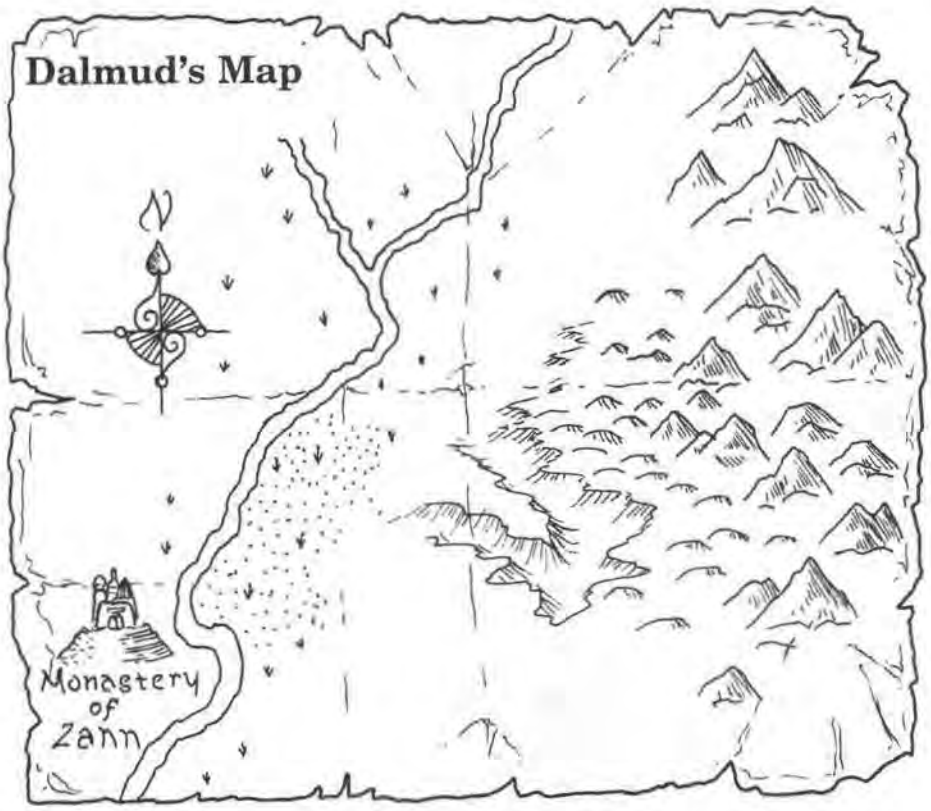
Emambo the Chancy (efreet): INT very; AL N; AC 2; MV 9, fly 24 (B); HD 10; hp 54; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 3–24; SA see below; SD fire resistance; MR nil; SZ L (12′ tall); ML 15; XP 7,000; *Land of Fate* boxed set.

Emambo can use *produce flame* or *pyrotechnics* at will. Once per day he can use each of the following powers: become *invisible*, *enlarge* himself, assume *gaseous form*, *detect magic*, *polymorph self*, create a *wall of fire*, and create an *illusion*. Illusions created can have both visible and audible components, and they last without concentration until touched or dispelled. All spell-like powers are used at 15th level, except *enlarge*, which is used at 10th level.

The third day's travel sees the caravan traversing the pass: the ground becomes rocky, and the caravan slows. It is cold atop the mountain pass, despite the sun shining down from above, but there is no snow. Many small canyons carved into the rock empty into the pass, and the large boulders that cover their floors discourage anybody from deviating from the wadi. As the sun starts to descend, a magnificent view opens up before the PCs, the desert stretching for many miles. Faintly, in the distance, they can see a glimmer of Gana Bay. About halfway down the pass, the caravan is forced to halt by the failing light, and the caravan camps for the night.

This is the moment for which Essafah has been waiting: he has been told by Emambo that an opportunity to steal the jewel will come this evening. After dinner and the evening prayer, he approaches one of the PCs (a thief, if possible) and tries to persuade the PC to steal the jewel rose for him. Essafah has drunk his potion of *glibness*, and he sounds very reasonable while he explains that he has found a way to lift the jewel's curse and offers the PC riches piled upon riches to steal it—to be paid after he has found someone to buy the jewel, of course.

If the PC does not accept the offer and tries to restrain Essafah, the would-be thief tries to escape using his potion of *gaseous form*. (You may wish



to roll on the potion compatibility chart, *DMG*/191; note, however, that results indicating Essafah's death require you to adjust later events.) Essafah then approaches Fahtan ibn Nabil immediately afterward, while the potion of *glibness* is still effective. Fahtan agrees to steal the jewel.

About three turns after Essafah approaches the PC, a very hungry group of debbi attack the caravan. These hyena-like creatures cause much confusion with their fear power, and if Fahtan has agreed to steal the jewel, he makes his move at this time rather than waiting until everybody is asleep. Essafah is hiding some distance away from the caravan with the camels, but he comes to see what the commotion is about. His cowardly nature compels him to surrender if he suffers any damage.

Debbi (5): INT low; AL NE; AC 7; MV 15, climb 6; HD 1+1; hp 7, 5, 4, 3, 2; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1–4; SA induce fear; MR nil; SZ S; ML 7; *MM*/241.

The fear power of the debbi affects all animals and men in a 20 yard radius, as per the *fear* spell, lasting for 2 rounds per debbi in the pack. The power can be used once per turn, but once a creature makes a saving throw vs. a particular debbi's fear, it is not affected by that debbi's fear for at least another hour. During the beginning of the attack, all of the debbi use their fear power at the same time, forcing multiple saving throws for all on the northern edge of the camp.

If the PCs do not manage to stop Fahtan and Essafah, the two thieves travel south through the foothills of the mountains so as to lose any pursuit, after which they head for Sikak. The PCs are given the job of pursuing the duo by Dalmud and Omar. If none of the PCs have tracking skill, Anwar accompanies them (he has tracking proficiency). Essafah and Fahtan lead pursuers on a merry dance through the foothills of the al-Yabki mountains, through the night and the following morning. You might want to have the PCs catch up to Fahtan, but Essafah should elude the party. Go to "A Visit from the Past."

If the PCs have managed to stop Essafah from stealing the jewel, the whole caravan continues as normal on the morning after the attempted theft. The caravan carefully winds its way down the mountainside, and by midmorning has reached the edge of the desert. The most dangerous part of the journey is over. The desert soon passes into seasonal grasslands, a more rocky and varied terrain type than deep desert. Occasional skeletal bushes, rare Joshua trees, and other vestigial traces of plant life show that the caravan will come to civilization within the next few days.

Somewhat before noon, one of the sentries spots a column of smoke to the south. The PCs are called to Dalmud, who asks them to investigate this unusual occurrence. Dalmud tells the PCs that the caravan will camp near the Monastery of Zann at the end of the day. If the PC party is short on fighting power, Anwar accompanies them. Before the PCs leave, Dalmud gives them a small map showing the caravan route, the monastery, and a number of landmarks (see map).

A Visit from the Past

As the PCs ride through the desert, either toward the distant column of smoke or in pursuit of Essafah, they come upon several sets of camel tracks. These lead toward a rocky, much eroded area of the foothills. If the PCs are in pursuit of Essafah, his tracks seem to join the new sets, and a thin column of smoke starts curling upward in the direction toward which the tracks are pointing. The time is early afternoon.

> After a short while, a series of canyons become visible. These are floored with sand, their walls worn smooth by the wind and weather. Gradations of sandstone and chalk line the sides of the canyon as you follow the tracks into one of the canyons.
>
> The canyon ends in a round bowl, in which the sand is churned as if by the passage of numerous camels. The bowl has no other exits. In the center of the bowl a pile of desert bushes, camel dung, and rags burns merrily to the accompaniment of much smoke. The smoke rises vertically, despite a slight breeze which swirls around the bowl.

Seven of Achbar's corsairs have set up an ambush here; they were instructed to attract and kill some of the caravan guards in order to weaken the caravan's defenses prior to the main attack. The bowl was already occupied before they came, though: it is the place where Mustafa—Kamal's father—died, and where his kada, generated the

moment of his death, must remain unless at least one pound of the sand from this bowl is moved by another creature. In that case, the kada can accompany the sand.

The kada is aware of Achbar's movement across the desert, and it is very frustrated at not being able to get near him. It feels the hand of Fate in the arrival of the PCs to this place, and when the combat starts, the kada joins in on the side of the PCs during the second round of melee.

Kada: INT average; AL LE; AC 4; MV fly 12; HD 4+4; hp 20; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2–8; SA suffocation; SD naturally invisible, only hit by magic weapons, half damage from cold or fire; MR 10%; SZ M; ML 14; XP 1,400; New Monster.

Mustafa's kada has the ability to move dry sand, which it uses to suffocate opponents, causing unconsciousness in 2–4 rounds and death in 2–5 more. You might want to use the "Holding your breath" rule from *PHB*/160 for creatures with a Constitution score. Note that water foils this attack.

The corsairs are led by their first mate, a one-eyed dwarf named Ahmed.

Ahmed: AL LE; AC 7; MV 6; F3 (corsair); hp 25; THAC0 19; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; SD +4 to saves vs. magic and poison; S 17, C 15; ML 16; XP 270; leather armor, alligator-skin daraq, *short sword +1* (specialized: +3/+4 total), jambiya (+1/+1), *potion of healing*, pouch (23 dinars, 16 dirham, 12 bits).

Corsairs: AL CE; AC 8 or 7; MV 12 or 6; F1 (corsair); hp see above; THAC0 20; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg by weapon type; SD by race; ML 12; XP; weapons per individual, aba, leather armor, pouch (2–12 dinars, 1–10 dirham, 1–10 bits).

The others corsairs include the following characters:

- a short, fat elven woman with a penchant for sharp knives (hp 6)

- a 6'3" tall human warrior, who wields a scimitar and has a 40% chance per round of melee combat to be overtaken by bloodlust, gaining 6 extra hp, a +2 damage bonus and a –1 penalty to AC (hp 9)

- two human brothers who both use short bows and jambiya (hp 7, 4)

- a neutrally aligned half-elven girl wielding a cutlass and daraq, (hp 5)

Kada

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	None
INTELLIGENCE:	Low to Very (5–12)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Any
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	Fly 12 (A)
HIT DICE:	4+4
THAC0:	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2–8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	see below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	see below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	10%
SIZE:	M
MORALE:	Elite (13–14)
XP VALUE:	975 with special attack: 1,400

Kada are magical spirits formed when a person dies in a manner which evokes emotion not quite sufficient to cause the formation of a ghost. The dying person's emotion casts a shadow, and a kada is formed. The dying person's soul then continues to the Otherlands, leaving the kada behind. Kada always have a purpose related to what caused the emotion which created them.

Kada are spirits and cannot speak or communicate by telepathy, though they can understand all languages which the person who formed them could understand. ESP allows the user to read some of the kada's thoughts. A kada appears to a *detect magic* or *detect invisibility* spell as a colored cloud appropriate to the emotion which created it.

Kada are naturally invisible and cannot move far from the place where they were created without the help of another being. They have only a limited ability to interact with the world, being able to move one type (or group of types) of item appropriate to the person who created the kada. For example, a carpenter's kada might be able to move any saw in its range.

Combat: Kada attack with whatever they can affect; this attack always causes 2–8 hp damage. The range of a kada's object moving is 60', but while a kada is moving something it must stay stationary. Some kada have special attacks depending on what they can affect: a kada able to affect the wind might have a suffocation attack, whereas one able to affect bow and arrow would have a ranged missile attack.

The kada's natural invisibility and its ephemeral nature make it difficult to hit. For an enemy able to see the invisible or with continuous *detect magic*, the kada's AC is 8. A kada can be harmed only by items or creatures which are in some way magical. It suffers half damage from magical cold or fire.

A magical spirit, a kada cannot be turned. It can, however, be dispelled by a successful *dispel magic* vs. 9th level, which destroys the kada. A kada cannot enter an *anti-magic shell* or similar areas where magic is not active.

Habitat/Society: Kada always have a goal that they continually attempt to achieve. The goal is always something that was important to the person who formed the kada, but the nature of the goal can vary widely. As kada float on the magical currents of the world, they usually have special knowledge pertaining to their goal.

Kada often run into one major problem when attempting to fulfill their goal: they are unable to move more than 300 yards beyond the place where they were created, unless an intelligent creature moves a substantial item from that place. If this occurs, then the kada can move with the item. The kada itself cannot move items beyond the 300 yard radius. Kada can thus be found anywhere where there are or have been humans or demihumans.

Ecology: Kada are formed more often by those who have the potential to work magic than by those who do not. Nevertheless they are still very rare and have never yet been created intentionally. If a kada is unable to fulfill its goal or is older than 100 years, it starts to erode and eventually breaks up.

When a kada has achieved its goal, it dissipates. There is a 20% chance that the magic released by the kada's dissipation instills some minor magical power in a nearby item.

• and a tall, thin human male who fights two handed with a hand axe and a straight dagger, without penalty because of the corsair kit advantage (hp 8)

When the PCs have all entered the bowl, the corsairs attack from well-concealed positions. The party must make a surprise roll at –3, and even if the PCs are not surprised, the corsairs automatically have initiative. On the first round, only missile fire is forthcoming, four arrows and four thrown daggers. The attacks concentrate on the PCs who appear strongest (fighters and clerics). The corsairs then close for melee. On the second round of melee, the kada joins in on the side of the PCs, directing sand blasts at targets in range.

If the PCs came here chasing Essafah, Ahmed is carrying the jewel rose. He took it from Essafah after a short struggle, and he knows that this is the jewel his master, Achbar, is looking for. He stays on the fringes of the melee and flees if the battle goes against the corsairs, in order to take the jewel to Achbar.

After the combat, the kada uses its power to animate dry sand to create a robed and sashed human figure, having it gesture that it wants to go with the PCs. If a *detect evil* spell is used, the kada radiates evil, since it is a product of hate; but the sandy figure it animates does not radiate evil. The figure indicates that one of the PCs should open a sack. It then fills the open sack with sand and animates more sand to reform its human-seeming apparition. It then gestures that the sack should be closed tightly.

When the PCs carry the bag of sand, the kada forms a scarred, old human face (Achbar's) in the sand on the ground and causes the figure to stamp on it. The half-crushed face remains behind as the robed figure collapses, to be swept away by the desert winds.

The corsair camp is on the flats at the top of the canyon walls. Seven saddled and hobbled camels (eight, including Essafah's camels, if Ahmed managed to flee) stand near bags of foodstuffs, replacement weapons and sitting blankets arranged in a loose circle around a small fire, on which a battered can bubbles with leftover coffee. If the PCs were chasing him, Essafah is also here, bound and gagged. If released, he attempts to talk the PCs into taking him with them, saying (if Ahmed got away) that he always knows roughly where the jewel rose is, and that the PCs need him to find it. Fahtan's corpse is lying close by, if the PCs did not catch him earlier.

Ahmed's camel is of above-average quality, being "high-spirited" (see *DMG*/54).

The Return

After the battle with the corsairs, the PCs should head back to the pre-arranged meeting place with the caravan. But when they arrive there three hours later, they find neither the caravan nor any trace of its passage.

The PCs have a choice. They can either continue on toward the monastery on the map, or they can follow the wadi back toward the pass. In the latter case, they come upon the site of the caravan's ambush after three turns riding. The wadi is some 10′ deep at this point.

> After some time, you notice slight traces of smoke farther along the wadi. The sun is setting now, illuminating the sky behind you with lances of red light. You speed up, moving toward a sharp bend in the wadi. Loud cawing sounds come from close by.
>
> Carnage spreads before you as you round the corner. The fitful sunlight bouncing off the canyon walls shows you slain men and women huddled together in little heaps, interspersed with the carcasses of dead and dying camels. Vultures hop from one foot to the other as they make their way through the battlefield, looking for a few more choice bites.

If the PCs disturb the vultures, the foul birds flap away, squawking mockingly, knowing full well that their turn will come. The PCs can easily spot the trail of many camels moving up a collapsed section of the wadi's southern wall and away into the desert. A sloping ledge leads to the top of the wadi at the northern side. If the PCs look through the remains of the caravan, they come across two survivors.

One is Djuhah al-Turabi, one of the merchants who accompanied Omar on the journey. Fat Djuhah is furtively moving around the camp, looting what he can from the dead. He is dirty but unharmed, and he is carrying a large sack with loot from various sources (some of it is his own). The sack contains 248 dinars, 379 dirham, a silver bracelet (worth 500 dinars), a pair of small agates (worth 50 dinars each) and a jewelled dagger (worth 750 dinars for gems and workmanship; this is actually a *dagger of throwing +2*). Also in the sack is a bunch of old-looking parchments (worth 150 dinars to the right buyer). If the PCs did not accept the parchment offered them by the beggar in Jumlat prior to the journey's start, it is the top one in the packet. An Intelligence check at –4 is required to recognize it by those PCs who have seen it before. Djuhah can tell the PCs what happened:

> "We were ambushed by vile and cowardly robbers! We were traveling easily, when suddenly the sky clouded over. Dalmud was afraid that we would be trapped in the wadi when the rains came, so he ordered us to make for the slope over there." He points to the sloping ledge to the north. "Then rocks started falling on us from the top of the wadi walls, and hordes of bandits seemed to rise out of the very ground before us. They had obviously used sorcery to hide themselves.
>
> Dalmud, Omar, and I fought valiantly while the guards fell left and right, but in the end we were overcome. Dalmud was overwhelmed by sheer numbers, while Omar was felled by a dart thrown by the bandits' leader, a scarred, evil-looking old man. Most of the others were captured and taken as slaves. I . . . I managed to save myself.
>
> "See, I am bereft of worldly goods and transport." Djuhah shifts his ample bulk to obstruct your view of the sack he is carrying. "O woe that I, Djuhah the Mighty, should come to this! Surely enlightened folk like yourselves could spare a camel to see me back to civilization?"

The other survivor is Omar. He was hit by a dart thrown by Achbar himself, which was coated with a virulent magical poison which defies most magical curing. He is slowly dying, but he has enough strength left to attract the PCs attention. When the party gathers round him, he grabs for the hand of the closest of the PCs, and says:

"Ambush . . . It was Achbar. You must . . . save Rose. Swear by . . . the Hand of Fate. Swear!"

Omar stares at the PCs for two full rounds, but he is visibly fading. If the PCs do not swear, he falls unconscious and dies one turn later. In this case there is a 75% chance that the PCs fall under the *evil eye* (if you use that optional rule). If the PCs do swear, Omar falls unconscious but does not die immediately: knowing that someone will attempt to rescue his sister has given him the strength to survive a bit longer. If the PCs get him to the Monastery of Zann within the next six hours, he survives. (If Anwar is with the PCs, he insists that they bring Omar to the Monastery.)

If Essafah was captured during his attempt to steal the jewel rose earlier, he might also have survived the caravan's ambush, at your option. If he has, he would certainly try to obtain one of the PCs' camels and might even ask to be allowed to accompany the PCs on their quest. It is, after all, much safer to travel in a group.

As the PCs get ready to leave, the thick clouds above and to the west of them burst open in a deluge of rain. Within one turn the water in the wadi begins to rise, within three turns the wadi is half full with swiftly flowing brown water. All that remains on the site of the caravan's ambush is washed away.

The desert has become a plain of mud as far as the eye can see. This impedes travel, and as the sky is overcast the PCs could easily get lost if they wander too far from the course of the wadi. If they follow the watercourse, however, they have little trouble reaching the monastery of Zann in two hours or so. The rain stops in about an hour's time.

The Monastery of Zann and Beyond

As PCs near the Monastery of Zann, read or paraphrase the following:

In the distance you see a hill rising up from the desert, crowned by a large building. As you slowly wander closer you see green plants on the side of the hill, and a small orchard as well. A winding path comes from the wadi and curls its way up the hillside, ending at a wooden gate.

When somebody knocks on the small door set in the wooden gate, a small grated window opens, and a sleepy pair of eyes peers through. If the PCs have the wounded Omar with them, the monk opens the door immediately, saying "*Marhaba, maridaks.*" (It means "Welcome, travelers in need.") He then goes off to arrange to have Omar taken to the infirmary, telling the PCs that someone will be along shortly to take them to the Imam.

A monk enters the room and gestures for you to come with him. He leads you through a series of corridors until you cross an enclosed garden courtyard to reach a small door set into a high tower. The monk opens the door and ascends the stairs on the other side. At the top of the landing he moves aside a curtain. Beyond lies a spacious room with large windows looking out over the monastery and the desert. An elaborate mosaic covers the ceiling, and a man and an old woman sit on cushions on the floor.

The monk leading the PCs has taken a vow of silence and communicates only with gestures.

The people in the room are Imam Hawa ibn Esu al-Gani and Sister Ghunayya (hu-NAI-ya), an old woman with a near-perfect memory who is in charge of the Monastery's library. The Imam is intensely curious what the PCs are doing traveling during the rainy season, but he insists on making small talk first. A light meal is served, and once both sides are bound by the bond of salt, the talk turns to more serious matters. The Imam has information which could be important to the PCs:

• If the PCs mention the ruby rose, the Imam remarks that it is a curious coincidence: not so long ago, someone came to consult the Monastery's large library on just that subject. (If asked for a description, the Imam describes him as an old, scarred man, who he names Yusuf.)

• If the PCs mention the name Achbar in connection with the ambush, the Imam's face darkens, and he relates what he knows of Achbar ibn Akbar: the name, that he is a sorcerer (half true), and that he sometimes leads a band of corsairs on assaults on caravans (true). Sister Ghunayya knows and tells the story of Achbar's origin and how he was cast out of his tribe—she knows the names and roles of Kamal and Mustafa in the tale, though not that Kamal later moved to Jumlat (see the Adventure Background).

• If the PCs mention that they are looking for Achbar's lair, the Imam can tell them only that it is somewhere to the south, and suggests that they visit a holy man by the name of al-Bir. Al-Bir lives in the desert very close to Achbar's lair, in a cave beneath three stone spires, but he is not always willing to talk to visitors.

• If the PCs ask, Sister Ghunayya can translate the parchment obtained from the beggar in Jumlat. Read out the translation from page 31 to the players.

The Imam offers to heal any PCs who are injured, on the condition that when they have time they fast for a day and spend the day after in prayer to Zann the Learned. The Imam is a 9th-level ethoist priest and has two *cure light wounds*, one *cure serious wounds* and one *cure critical wounds* spell available.

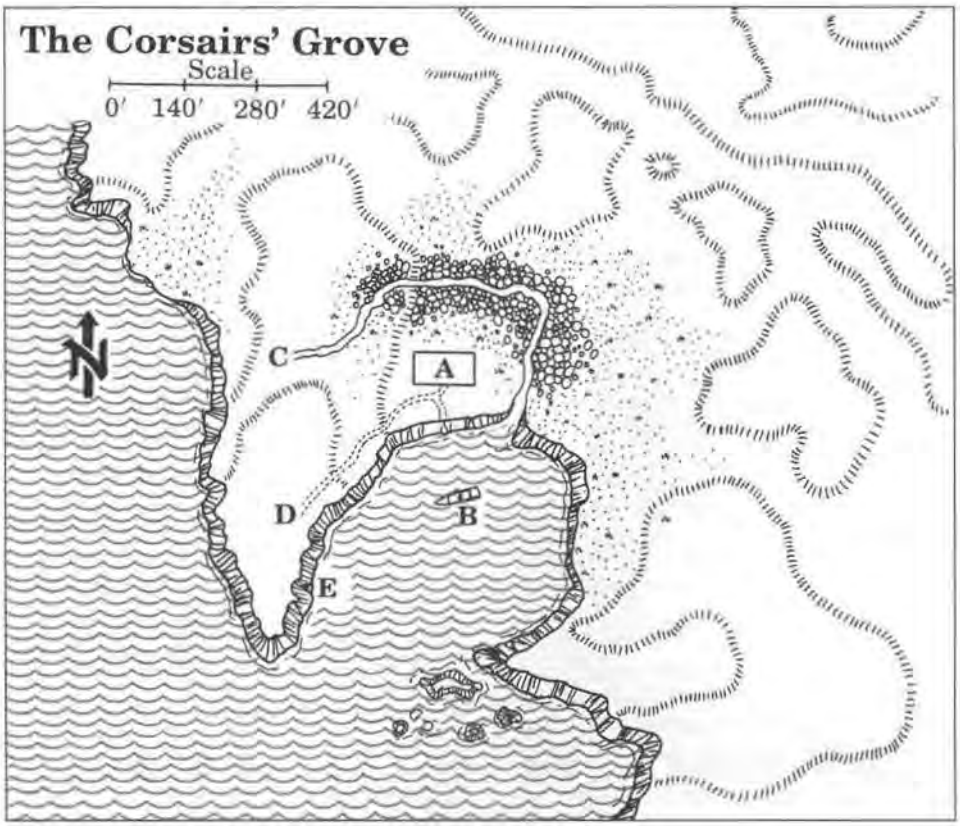
The kada keeps very quiet during this encounter, as the Imam can tell exactly what it is—and he is not pleased to see it traveling with the party. If its presence is revealed to the Imam by the PCs, the Imam tells them of the kada's general nature and abilities, but he is not able to tell them whose kada it is or what its purpose might be. The kada refuses to act even if it is revealed.

The PCs are welcome to stay the night at the monastery, or longer (up to the three days allowed by the bond of salt). Staying longer might not be wise, as it gives the corsairs a lot of time and allows the rains to obliterate their tracks.

The Green Desert

When dawn breaks across the desert, the PCs catch a magnificent and short-lived sight: that of the desert in bloom. All the small plants that make up the seasonal grasslands have taken the slight rain allotted them and produced flowers. Small insects buzz around, and a damp haze lingers near the ground.

When the PCs start out again, they must cross the stream which now flows in the wadi. Swimming by the side of one's camel is possible if the PC doing it



makes a successful Strength check in order to avoid losing his grip and being swept away.

Tracking attempts are at +5 to the roll. However, for the next three days, there is a 10% chance that any given hour is one of torrential rain (which modifies the chance to track by –10), and a 10% chance of an hour's normal rain (which modifies the chance to track by –5). After three days the chances for rain decrease by 1%/day, first the chance for torrential rain, then the chance for normal rain, until in two weeks (20 days) the chances are where they started: at zero.

If the PCs pick up the trail at the ambush site, the journey to the corsairs' lair takes eight hours. About three hours into the journey, the corsairs' trail splits. A number of corsairs deserted here and took part of the loot with them. The deserters' trail fades after a mile or so.

However, should the PCs lose the trail, which, knowing the way players roll in these situations, is likely, the party has several options. Firstly, they can consult the kada, if it is with them. The kada has a sense of Achbar's location at all times, but note that it requires dry sand to communicate; if the PCs have not kept the bag of sand dry, there is none in the vicinity. From this, the PCs can learn of the kada's vulnerability to water. Secondly, if Essafah is with the party, he can point out the general direction in which the jewel rose is located. Once the PCs get close enough, they see the spires beneath which al-Bir lives.

Allow some latitude over how long the PCs take to get to the lair. You might want to run a few random encounters during the journey; any of the ones on the previous random encounter table which have not yet been used are suitable. Fast-growing carnivorous plants are also appropriate.

The Corsairs' Cove

When the PCs start getting close to the lair, Gana Bay becomes visible above the hills, and a fresh sea breeze blows in from the east.

When the PCs approach the spires, read or paraphrase the following to them:

> As you near the spires you see, quite high up, a cave opening set into the rock. Not two hundred feet away from the cave a grimy old man clad only in a loincloth sits on a rock.

> "*Sabah al-khayr, sayyidis*. Welcome to my humble home. Please tell me what you seek, so that I may be of service," he says as you come closer.

Al-Bir is gregarious and somehow familiar. He appears not to remember his name until it is told to him.

If the PCs tell him that they are looking for the lair of Achbar ibn Akbar, al-Bir takes them to a ridge beyond the three spires. Once there, he tells them the following story while pointing out the lair's location: Some time ago, a group of heroes passed this way. Achbar's corsairs had perpetrated a series of nasty raids and had broken completely with the Law of the Loregiver. The heroes were going to put an end to the raids of Achbar and his corsairs. Unfortunately, they attempted to gain entry to the lair by descending onto one of the lair's balconies. An explosion on the cliffside blew most of them into the bay below, and those who survived were captured and sold as slaves.

According to al-Bir, there is another way into the lair: via the stream. The cave opening out to the cove is bound to be guarded, as is the front door. Of course, entering via the stream would require a boat: al-Bir would be more than happy to lend them his. He also tells the PCs that a large quantity of fish is taken up to the lair each day—more than even a dozen men could eat.

As the PCs are about to leave for the pirates' lair, al-Bir tells them that he "has had a vision from the gods," telling him that the jewel rose should be removed from the sight of man.

If the PCs pass this way again after the ruby rose has found its end, they discover that the holy man is an entirely different person, and has a curious story of how he was assaulted outside his cave some time ago and awoke with a large bump on his head, his already limited wardrobe short one loincloth. His boat, also, had mysteriously disappeared (if the PCs entered the lair via the stream).

Whether or not the PCs are detected as they approach the lair depends on when they approach the lair. The table below gives the most important events taking place each day at various locations. The date referred to is in whole days *after* the caravan's ambush.

Date/Sea Mage's Lair/Corsairs

1st day, evening/Achbar feasts with Mahmud/Corsairs celebrate until midnight

2nd day, morning/Achbar begins his study of the jewel rose/Corsairs sleep late

2nd day, evening/Achbar discovers Samia's identity/Corsair patrols begin

3rd day, morning/Achbar masters the jewel rose/Corsairs sail to meet slavers

3rd day, evening/Achbar sends Emambo to carry Kamal from Jumlat to the lair

If the PCs approach at noon or later on the second day, there is a 5% chance per turn (cumulative) that the party comes across a corsair patrol. These patrols are scarce because nothing other than the corsairs ever comes from the desert side of the lair.

Corsairs (3): AL LE; AC 7; MV 12; F1 (corsair); hp 7, 5, 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 8; XP 15; leather armor, daraq, javelins (2), cutlass, jambiya, pouch (2–8 dinars, 1–6 dirham each).

At this point, two NPCs might be accompanying the party. If Essafah ibn Waqar is with the party, his goal is to obtain the jewel rose and to run as few risks as possible while doing so. If Anwar accompanies the party, his goal is to avenge Dalmud and to survive.

A. Storehouse. This is where the pirates store their ill-gotten gains. It is a solid building with one large double door, padlocked with a good quality lock (no modification to pick). The door can suffer 50 hp damage from a suitable weapon (an axe is ideal) before breaking open.

Most of the goods from the caravan are here, as well as other goods from previous robberies at sea and in the desert worth 1,500 dinars in total. Also here are all caravan members taken as slaves. They are kept in several slave pens together with a number of other slaves. The females and males are kept separate from each other. Note that Samia bint Kamal is also here, wearing the *veil of desert dryness*, until the end of the second day, at which time Achbar discovers her true identity.

Two corsairs always keep guard by the door during the night. They signal their ship every three hours using a lantern.

Corsairs (2): AL LE; AC 8; MV 12; F1 (corsair); hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 9; XP 15; leather armor, short sword, pouch (1–6 dinars, 2–12 dirham, 3–24 bits).

B. Corsair Ship. This ship is a zaruq, with dented and scratched sides and railings that speak of long service. A watch of three corsairs stays awake on board the dhow at all times, while during the day three corsairs are out on patrol. The total number of corsairs on board is either 10 or 7, depending on whether the patrol is out; three corsairs are wounded down to 2 hp. For complete statistics, see area A above.

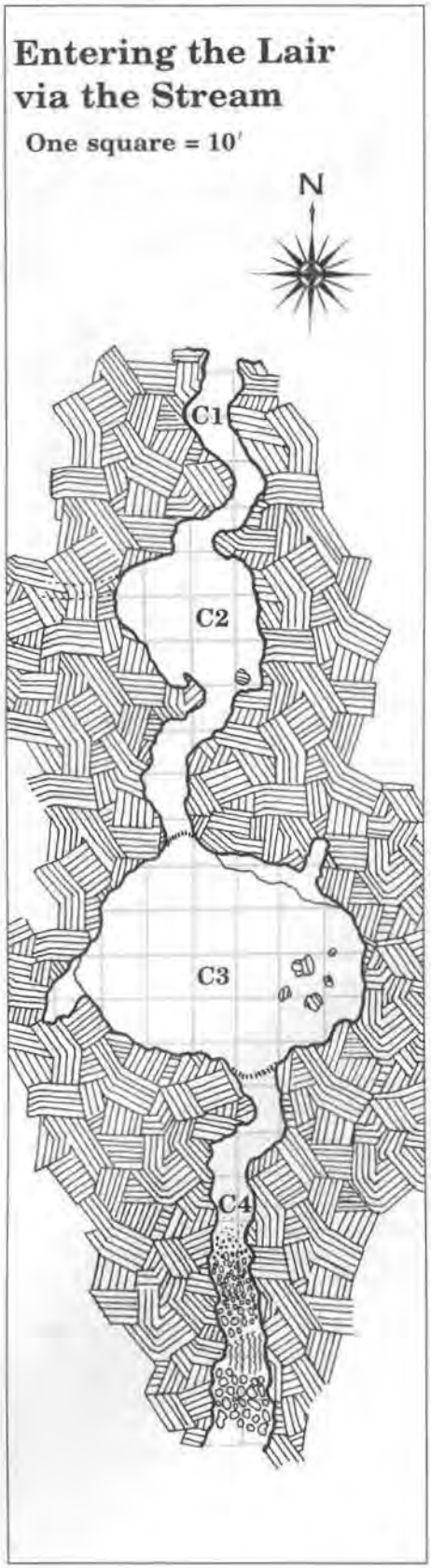
C. Stream. This is a freshwater stream which comes from an opening in the sloping seaside cliff in which Achbar has made his home. See C1–4 for details of this area.

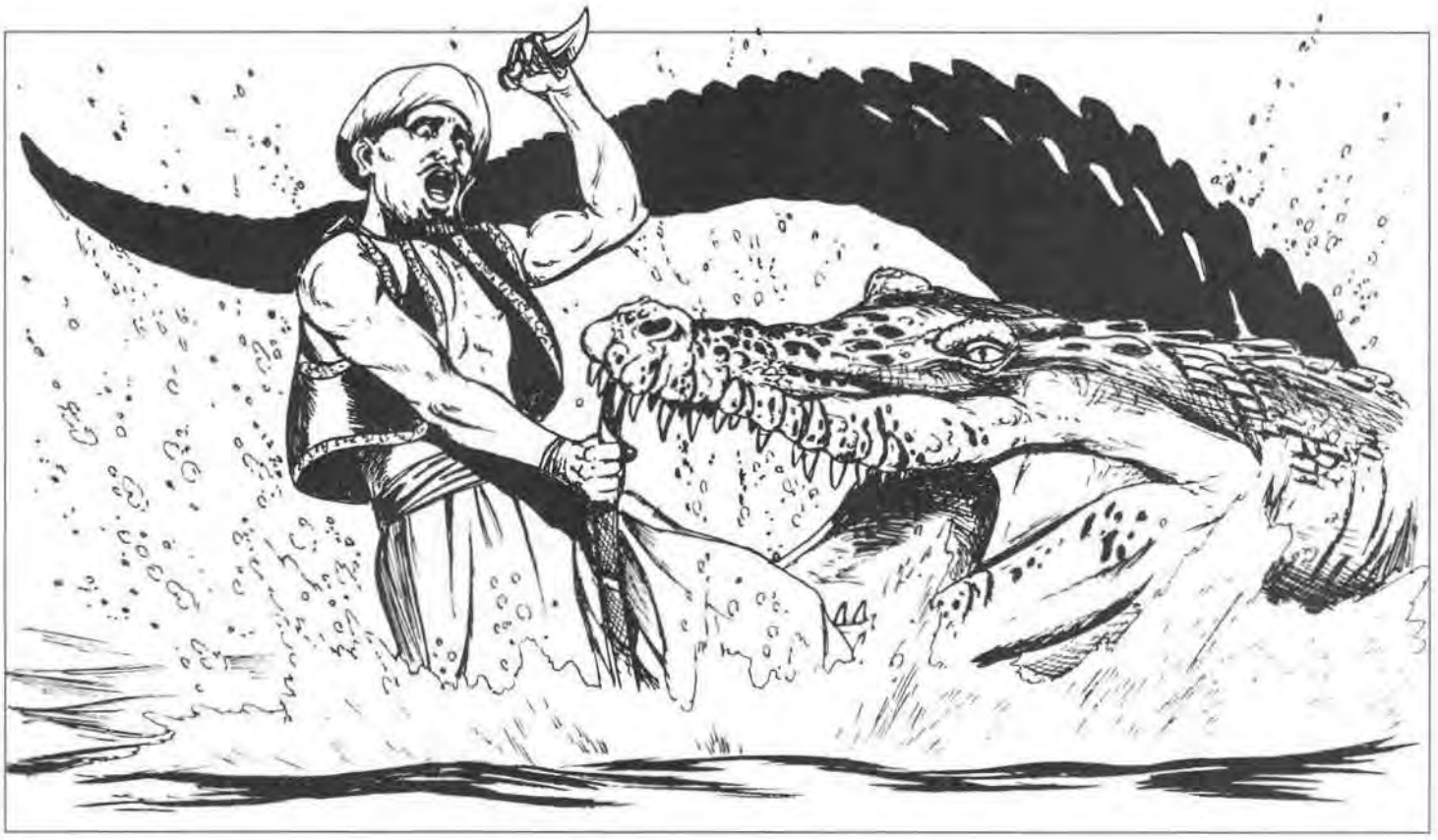
D. The Lair of Achbar ibn Akbar. The Sea Mage's abode consists of a complex of chambers hewn into the rock of the cliffs themselves. Several chambers have elaborate balconies protruding from the cliff face, but the greater part of the complex is not visible from the outside. A path trails up to its entrance, though the entrance itself is hidden in a small gorge. See area 1 of the Sea Mage's Lair.

E. Seaside Cave. This sea cave provides entrance to Achbar's home. See area 12 of the lair for further details.

Entering the Lair via the Stream

C1. Stream Entrance. The first stretch of the underground stream features a very low ceiling, with only about 3′ between the surface of the water and the ceiling. The water flows quickly, and the tunnel angles upward.





C2. Large Cave.

This large cave is about ten feet high overhead. The northern entrance consists of a sharp ridge, over which the water flows only an inch deep. Immediately south of the ridge, the stream's rocky bottom seems to disappear. The water flows slowly in the cave proper. The cave's floor, visible again under the water further south, rises and falls while many small pebbles collect in the dips.

Any PC diving here may discover a smooth-walled pipe leading out to sea at the cave's deep end. By the southern entrance, the water is only about 4′ deep.

C3. Guardian's Cave. Fine metal mesh barriers stretch across both entrances to this large cave. The mesh is wide enough to let small fish pass, but not the PCs. Each barrier is nailed into the walls and can be removed by brute strength (Strength check at –10, up to two PCs can combine their Strengths, but 50% chance to upset the boat) or by cutting the mesh (15 hp damage with a sharp weapon). Both mesh barriers bend out from the cave, as if pushed by some powerful occupant (see below).

Beyond the mesh you see a large cave. Numerous stalactites hanging from the ceiling, and the murky depths of the pool render the bottom invisible. On the north side of the cave there is a narrow ledge. Some distance along the ledge is a deep niche.

The cave is 15′ high, and the ledge is 3′ wide. Inside the cave lurks a giant crocodile, thrown in here by Achbar and confined by the meshes when it was still young. Soon the crocodile grew too large to leave the cave and became ever more restless within its prison. Now it is a rogue, killing anything that comes within its reach. It is fed by Achbar's servants, who throw fish small enough to swim through the mesh into the stream further on.

The crocodile starts circling up from the bottom of the pool when it detects anything moving above, and attacks the round after. Allow the PCs a 3-in-10 chance each to detect something moving in the water during this round.

Giant Crocodile: INT animal; AL N; AC 4; MV 6, swim 12; HD 7; hp 35; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 3–18/2–20; SD surprise (–2 penalty to opponents' rolls); MR nil; SZ H (26′ long); ML 11; XP 1,400; *MM*/49.

C4. Rapids.

Here the underground stream cascades over a number of great boulders worn smooth over the years, forming a treacherous set of rapids.

If the PCs wish to take the boat beyond this point, they must carry it (a combined Strength of 30 can carry the boat here). Furthermore, every PC trying to negotiate the rapids must make a successful Strength check or tumble down the rapids, ending up at the bottom after suffering 1–4 hp damage from the fall.

If one PC contributing to carrying the boat fails his check and the remaining PCs do not have a combined Strength of 30 or more, all PCs carrying the boat fall and end up back at the bottom; all suffer 3–6 hp damage, and the boat falls with them.

About two-thirds up the rapids is a section of smoothed stone about 10' long and nearly horizontal. At the top of the rapids is the entrance to the reservoir. Refer to the map of the Sea Mage's Lair.

The Sea Mage's Lair

Inside the complex, the floors are all stone and laid with tiles, while the walls are plastered white. All corridors and rooms are 10' high unless otherwise stated.

Lighting comes from simple copper oil lamps set into the walls at regular intervals.

On the face of the cliff above the various balconies sets of *glyphs of warding* have been placed. Anyone attempting a descent from the clifftop above onto a balcony triggers a *glyph* and suffers 7–28 hp fire damage, then must save vs. paralyzation or be blown off the cliffside and into the water below (a fall of 90', with a landing near the cave on the bottom level attracting the cave's guardian).

The chimney is not warded, but the fire underneath it is always lit.

The layout of the lair roughly divides it into two parts: the great hall and the chambers around it on the Top Level, and the rest. If the PCs enter the lair via the Door of Poisonous Waters, they encounter the corsairs in the great hall area first. Mahmud's attitude makes it unlikely that he will go to Achbar for help, and the two areas are fairly well insulated from each other as far as sound is concerned.

Middle Level

1. The Door of Poisonous Waters. This is the only land-based entrance to Achbar's lair. Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> Before you a doorway is hewn into the rock. The door itself is nothing but a sheet of falling water about two inches thick, beyond which you can make out a dimly-lit hallway. It is bordered with writing in a strange script which gleams ever so slightly. In front and to the side of the door lie a number of small animal skeletons.
>
> Set into the stone to the right is a brass hexagon, plain and tarnished with age.

If the PCs cast *detect magic*, the water of the door registers as magical, as does the writing around the door's edge. A *read magic* spell reveals that the writing is part of the physical manifestation of a powerful alteration magic to do with poison.

The water of the door is poisonous, and causes any being who touches it to save vs. poison or die in 3–6 turns. The affected person becomes delirious after half this time has passed. If the save is successful, horrible cramps set in immediately, incapacitating the victim for 1–3 turns and causing 2–8 hp damage. Note that even the slightest splash of the door's water has this effect. The door is not affected by natural winds or weather. *Dispel magic* (vs. a 9th-level caster) is not effective against the water—it flows too quickly and is continually renewed. The focus of the spell causing the water to become poisonous is the writing, and a successful *dispel magic* against the writing causes the magic to cease.

If a PC knocks on the brass hexagon, he summons the door's guardian. A deep tone sounds, building up to an impressive crescendo, and then a 9"-tall gen steps out of the door, a maridan named Salim.

Achbar obtained Salim as payment for a service rendered to a sha'ir. The gen still has 56 years of service to go, and he is very bored. His precise instructions are "to part the waters of the door so that only those who say the password or bear the Mark of the Sea Mage may enter," and Salim is forbidden to speak the password himself (it is "maftuh," which means "open" in Ancient Midani). *ESP* might be used to pluck it from Salim's mind, though. He is immune to the door's poison, and if the PCs attack him, he stands in the door and splashes water at them (10' range).

Salim: INT low; AL N; AC 5; MV 6, swim 12; HD 5; hp 24; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1–6; SD save as 18th-level fighter, saves at +2 vs. water based attacks, water based attacks are at –2 to hit and damage, water breathing; MR nil; SZ S (9" tall); ML 10; XP 420; MC13 (Gen).

2. Antechamber to the Great Hall.

> This simple rectangular chamber contains two large mirrors with elaborate wooden frames hanging on the left and right walls. A small tapping hammer lies by a gong upon a wooden table.

Sounding this gong causes the gong in area 19 to sound as well, attracting the attention of the corsairs there.

Note that the eastern mirror is a magical form of one way glass and is mounted on a secret door. The secret door can be opened by pressing three spots on the mirror's frame in order. A slight click sounds when one of the spots is pressed.

3. Great Hall.

> This is a large square hall with a high ceiling, from which two large chandeliers hang on iron chains. The floor is decorated with a complex and colorful mosaic, and marble pillars support a gallery all the way around the square. A clear view of the gallery is obstructed by ornate wooden screens.
>
> Numerous cloth hangings adorn the walls on the ground floor. The southern half of the chamber is dominated by a low dais, on which sits a small mountain of pillows.

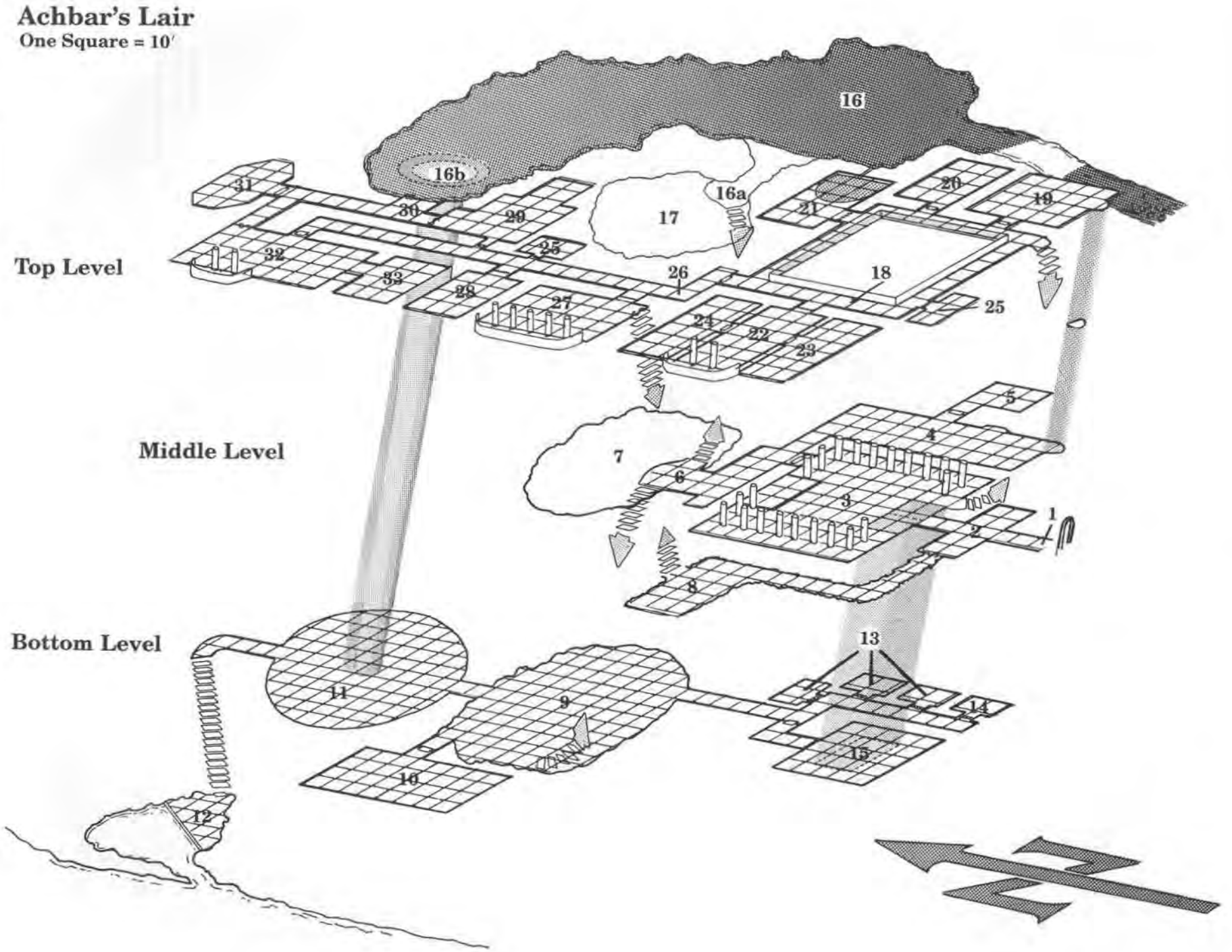
By the entrance to the hall from the antechamber is a carefully concealed pit trap, which is triggered by any weight over 150 lbs. Anything that falls down the pit suffers 1–6 hp damage and ends up in the Skeleton Chamber (area 15) on the bottom level. The trap can be disarmed by lifting the lever in area 19.

The cloth hangings on the walls are quite rare, worth 1,000 dinars to the right buyer.

During the day there is a 30% chance that two corsairs are here. See the corsair ship for complete statistics. At night there are always two corsairs here, but there is a 40% chance that they are sleeping. Any loud noises here, such as two or more rounds of combat, alert Mahmud in area 23.

4. Kitchen.

> This chamber is obviously the kitchen of the complex. Several large tables are laden with cutting boards, sharp implements and other kitchen utensils. Some foodstuffs are stacked in piles on the tables and in the corners of the room. A fire blazes merrily in the fireplace in the western wall, several bins resting just next to it. A door is set into the wall, just south of the fireplace.


Achbar's Lair
One Square = 10'
Top Level
Middle Level
Bottom Level
16
16b
16a
17
31
30
29
32
33
28
27
26
25
21
20
19
18
25
24
22
23
5
4
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11
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15
10
12

A large cabinet in the north wall is in fact an elevator tray, intended to take food up to the dining chamber above. Its maximum weight capacity is 150 lbs. For each pound carried beyond that limit, there is a 2% chance that the rope breaks. The bins contain coal and dried camel dung.

During the day, there is a 70% chance that two servant women are here. Both women have a curious mark on their foreheads (Achbar's symbol, a sign of their servitude).

Servants: AL CG; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level; hp 4 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg unarmed; ML 6.

5. Cold room. This small room is full of various foodstuffs such as meats, fish, goats milk, and yogurt. It is quite cool here. Someone listening carefully can hear the sound of water flowing overhead.

6. Landing.

> This landing opens onto a large cavern, and seems to be halfway up a long stair circling around its edge. The stairs continue up on the right and down on the left.

It is a 15′ drop from the landing to the floor of the cavern. During the daytime there is a 10% chance that one of the two servant women is encountered on her way back to the kitchen from the reservoir. She carries a large bucket of water.

7. Cavern of Fires. See the description on the Bottom Level (area 9).

8. Spy Tunnel.

> This walls of the tunnel are roughly hewn, and the floor is of plain, unworked stone. The area contains no light sources of its own, and the ceiling is eight feet high.

At the middle of the tunnel there is a room, in which stands a ballista and two cases of ballista bolts, as well as a case of specially-shaped flasks of greek fire. These flasks can be lighted and then fired by the ballista, bursting on impact. A hinged section of the cliff wall can be opened to provide a clear view of the cove and the pirate dhow far below.

Bottom Level

9. Cavern of Fires.

> This is a large natural cavern, with many stalagmites and stalactites. The cavern is unlit, but the stone of the walls and the stalagmites seems imbued with sparse veins of crystal, which gleam dully with light reflected from the cavern's exits. The walls are irregular, and you see many shadowy recesses. In the middle of the rough stone floor there is a deep, 10′ diameter pit, the bottom of which is lost in darkness. The rim of the pit is stained with soot.
>
> The cavern has three exits besides the stairs: one in the northwest, one to the east and one to the south. Beyond the southern exit you can see a well-lit hall.

The pit in the center of the cavern was once the home of the Pillar of Falling Flames. It was the companion of the Column of Rising Waters, in the next area. Both are magical phenomena created long ago by genies for purposes unknown. Sha'irs successfully detecting the work of geniekind recognize both the cavern and the hall as the work of those creatures.

When Achbar came here, he devised a way to suppress the Pillar and magically bind its guardian. The mystical energies of the pillar are bound into the soot, which drifts down from the ceiling in small quantities. Achbar regularly collects the soot for trade with other mages.

Any form of magical fire touched to the pit releases the Pillar from its magical suppression (though the touch of the flaming boar is not sufficient), unleashing a blazing pillar of fire equal to a permanent *wall of fire* spell. If the ruby rose (with Emambo inside) is thrown into the pit, the rose is destroyed and the efreet released. The Pillar is restored to its natural state, Emambo is at maximum hit points, and the efreet is friendly toward the PCs.

The cavern's guardian is a huge flaming boar, made permanently invisible by Achbar and bound not to touch any living creature unless its invisibility is thwarted (perhaps by a *dispel magic* spell). If made visible, the boar attacks immediately. If the PCs battle the flaming boar and the battle continues for more than four rounds, Achbar notices and arrives three rounds later. The boar will not leave the cavern.

Flaming Boar: INT low; AL CE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 7; hp 26; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 5–20; SD immune to fire; MR nil; SZ M (5′ tall at the shoulder); ML 14; XP 650; MC1 (Boar, Giant, modified).

PCs going down into the Cavern feel that the air is warm here and have a 40% chance to feel watched. PCs can sometimes (20% chance) hear soft snuffling, grunting noises nearby.

10. Stores. This large room is stacked full of boxes, sacks, and urns. They contain the various stores: flour, oil, pickled fish, and other non-perishable items.

11. The Hall of Waters.

> This is a large circular hall. At its center is a huge column of water, flowing *upward*. The ceiling arches to form a high flattened dome, decorated with swirling patterns in green and blueThe walls and floor are set with tiles of polished white and green marble. Six golden oil lamps, spaced evenly around the hall, provide light.
>
> Next to the column of water stands a large metal contraption, with elaborate curves of black iron. Its purpose seems to be to tap water from the column, which it deposits into a bowl.

The Column of Rising Waters draws its water from the sea below. The water is purified upon entering the column at the level of the floor and empties out into the reservoir on the Top Level.

The bowl into which the iron structure directs water stands 10′ away from the column. If the PCs examine the structure, they have a 30% chance to notice that the mechanism which causes it to start tapping can still be operated 10′ away from the column.

The column's guardian is a water weird. The weird begins taking its serpentine form on the round during which the PCs enter the hall, keeping itself carefully concealed behind the column. It attacks any PCs in range on the third round. The party suffers a –3 penalty to their surprise roll. The water weird has a 9′ striking range from the column.

Water Weird: INT very; AL CE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 19; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg drowning; SD sharp weapons only inflict 1 hp damage, cold acts as a *slow* spell on the weird, half or no damage from fire; MR nil; SZ L (15′ long); ML 13; XP 420; *MM*/104.

The Chief Villains

Achbar ibn Akbar, the Sea Mage

Achbar is a man ruled by hate; his emotions are as poisonous as the darts he hurls at his foes. He never forgets a wrong done him and goes to great lengths to gain revenge. He recognizes something beautiful when he sees it, but he desires it only as a possession.

For Achbar, reason is the most important tool, but it is only a means to an end. This attitude might mislead the PCs into thinking that he can be persuaded by well-presented arguments, especially as Achbar would like to talk to the PCs before battling them. Nothing could be further from the truth, however. The only reason he talks to the PCs is to determine the origin of the threat to his life; under no circumstances will he hand over the jewel rose or give up his revenge on Kamal. Achbar is also somewhat paranoid, a trait that has saved his life many times.

Achbar is a very dangerous opponent. If he has mastered the jewel rose, the first thing he does in combat is instruct Emambo to attack. If the PCs seem weak, he then casts *hold person* at any fighters in the party, followed by *fear*, *charm person*, and *magic missile*. His staff makes him dangerous even at close quarters. If the PCs seem strong, he uses his *charm of ice* to gain time, using the secret door in area 32 to circle around behind the PCs via the laboratory. He takes the copper automaton (from the area 29) with him if the PCs have not encountered it, then casts *protection from normal missiles* and *invisibility* on himself. Achbar waits until he is in a good position, and casts *cone of cold* and orders the automaton to attack. He follows up with *hold person* and *magic missile*. When he is reduced to 15 hp, he uses his potion. He saves *dimension door* for last in case he needs to escape and reach area 30. If he has not yet used *invisibility*, he casts *spectral force* (for a diversion) and *invisibility* in order to try to retrieve his spellbook. Otherwise, he unlocks the chest in area 30, takes its contents, casts *water breathing* from the scroll, and escapes through the fissure in the reservoir floor.

Achbar ibn Akbar: AL LE; AC 1; MV 9; M9 (sea mage); hp 37; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 8; D 16; C 15; I 17; W 12; Ch 15; ML 14; XP 5,000; *bracers of defense AC 5*, *ring of protection +2*, *staff of withering* (12 charges), *charm of ice*, six darts (all poisoned with type B poison), pouch (*potion of extra-healing*, the jewel rose, key to the chest in area 30, flask of water). Spells: *charm person, detect magic, magic missile, unseen servant; levitate, invisibility, mirror image; hold person, protection from normal missiles, spectral force; dimension door, fear; cone of cold*.

The *charm of ice* is a simple pendant which allows the user to cast a *wall of ice* (at the user's level) by mental command. It is useable only by mages and can be used only once.

An encounter with Achbar which finds the PCs on the losing end need not end with their deaths. Any PCs who survive in a reasonable state (positive hp) or surrender are sold as slaves.

Mahmud al-Aswad, captain of Achbar's corsairs

Mahmud "the Black" is a short, broad man with deep black hair. He commands the corsairs and is Achbar's faithful henchman. Mahmud took the blame for the desertion of a number of corsairs in the desert and feels humiliated. He is eager to get back into Achbar's good graces, and single-handedly defeating a group of trespassers would be just the thing.

If he hears fighting around the great hall area, Mahmud collects Ahmed (see area 24) and the corsairs from area 19. The two corsairs armed with slings are set on the gallery, while the remaining corsairs follow Mahmud down to the hall in order to engage in melee.

Mahmud fights in the two handed style, with cutlass and jambiya.

Mahmud al-Aswad: AL LE; AC 5; MV 12; F5 (corsair); hp 32; THAC0 16; #AT 5/2; Dmg by weapon type; S 18/15 (+1/+3), D 16, C 12, I 14, W 10, Ch 15, Ch 15; ML 12; XP 420; *leather armor +1*, *cutlass +2* (specialized: +4/+7 total), jambiya (total bonuses +1/+3), pouch (31 dinars, 18 dirham, three matched tourmalines (worth 100 dinars each)).

Anyone hit by the water weird must save vs. paralyzation or be dragged into the column. Once in the column, the PC is immediately pulled upward by the flow of the water and must make a second save vs. paralyzation to avoid drowning. After that he is out of the weird's grasp, and surfaces in the reservoir (area 16b) one round later.

12. Dock.

This is a natural cave at water level, with an opening leading to the cove outside. The floor is paved with tiles, like the rest of the lair, but the walls are bare. A small stone pier has been constructed, but no boats are moored here at the moment.

This is the way goods are usually brought into the lair. There is, of course, a creature outside set by Achbar to guard the entrance. The guardian is an enslaved water elemental that has been instructed to let only the pirates' skiff pass and to warn Achbar, via a tube leading up to area 32, when somebody moors their boat here.

Water Elemental: INT low; AL N; AC 2; MV 6, swim 18; HD 8; hp 38; THAC0 12; #AT 1; Dmg 5–30; SA overturn small vessels; SD +2 or better weapon needed to hit; MR nil; SZ L; ML 15; XP 2,000; *MM*/100.

13. Dungeon Cell. Like a typical Zhakaran dungeon cell, it is almost completely bare. Only ancient straw mattresses relieve the monotony of rough stone walls, ceiling, and floor.

14. Samia's Dungeon Cell. This cell is identical to the others. If the PCs inspect the cell at the end of the second day after the corsairs' ambush on the caravan or later, it is occupied by Samia bint Kamal (without the *veil of desert dryness*).

The PCs are not likely to have seen her before without the *veil*, and thus will not recognize her. She definitely recognizes them, however, and tells them her "nickname" in order to get the PCs to rescue her, stating that the jewel was a ruse. She knows from Achbar's gloating that the jewel rose is home to an efreet, and she insists on recovering the gem, knowing that her father, Kamal, will be left in danger otherwise.

15. Skeleton Chamber.

This room is dark and seemingly littered with human bones. A square hole in the ceiling stretches up out of sight. The room's single exit is blocked by a door made of iron bars.

The door is locked with a poor quality lock (+10% on chance to pick). Alternatively, a successful bend bars roll renders it permanently open. On the second round of any living being's presence in this room, seven skeletons rise up from the floor to kill the intruder. They fight until destroyed.

Skeletons (7): INT non-; AL N; AC 7; MV 12; HD 1; hp 7, 6, 5 (×3), 2 (×2); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SD half damage from edged or piercing weapons, immune to mind affecting spells; MR nil; SZ M; ML special; XP 65 each; *MM*/315.

Top Level

16. Reservoir.

This vast natural cavern seems to be some sort of reservoir. To the north the water cascades down a set of rapids to form an underground stream, and a landing leads east. The cavern is dark and unlit except for a pair of oil lamps fixed to the wall by the landing. To the south the reservoir stretches away into blackness.

In the southeast of the cave (area 16b) there is a bubbling of water welling up.

The water is about 10′ deep in most places, and the ceiling is 15′ high. Near the western edge of the reservoir is an underwater fissure, wide enough to allow a man to pass, through which water flows out to sea. During the day there is a 10% chance that one of the two servant women is at the landing (area 16a), refilling the oil lamps or fetching water. See area 4 for statistics.

17. Cavern of Fires. See the description in area 9.

18. Gallery.

An elaborate balcony set with wooden screens reaching all the way to the ceiling guards against falling from this gallery. A number of faded tapestries hang against the walls.

This gallery is 15′ off the floor of the hall below. One tapestry in the gallery's southeast corner conceals a door.

Any large amount of noise in this area attracts the attention of the corsairs in area 19, and possibly also Mahmud, from area 23.

19. Small Dining Chamber.

This square room contains a long, low table, with cushions arranged around it to seat nine people. A low cabinet is set against the south wall, and a small double door, lacquered white, is visible waist high in the north wall. Next to the double door a lever is recessed into the wall. A small niche in the western wall holds a gong.

The doors in the north wall lead to the elevator tray down to the kitchen. The cabinet contains fine silver plates and serving spoons (worth 200 dinars) and a matched set of gold boxes engraved with desert scenes which contain salt and pepper (worth 450 dinars).

The lever disarms the trap in area 3, while the gong is sympathetic to the one in area 2 (magically sounding if its mate sounds).

During the daytime there are either 4 or 6 corsairs here, depending on whether there were two in area 3. Two of them are armed with slings (and sling stones). They are playing cards and making so much noise that they don't notice anything outside this room—but, once the door is opened, they respond quickly.

20. Corsair Barracks. This room contains six simple cots, with a chest standing at the foot of each cot. The chests contain the belongings of the corsairs in areas 3 and 19. Some clothing and 1–8 dinars is the norm. At night the cots are occupied by the corsairs from area 19.

21. Baths. The western part of this room contains a semi-circular pool about 10′ across. Draped on a wooden rack are four thick towels. The water comes from the reservoir via a sluice mechanism operated by the wooden lever in the north wall. A large rubber plug in the pool's floor prevents the water from draining away.

22. Sitting Room. This large chamber has several rugs lying on the floor, and colorful paintings adorning the walls. A number of arches give access to a large balcony, where climbing plants, cane chairs, and tables stand.

The balcony has a magnificent view stretching across the cove and the sandy hills to the south. To either side of the balcony, arched windows open onto the bedrooms to the north and south of the sitting room. About 40′ south along the cliff face a second such balcony is visible.

23. Mahmud's Room.

Whoever lives here has expensive but bad taste. Thick scarlet curtains with infantile embroidery litter the room, making it difficult to see anything. You can just make out a large bed with what appears to be a scarlet mattress sitting in the northwestern corner of the room, and a wooden table with carved legs depicting tubby genies sits by the large arched windows.

If the PCs have been quiet, Mahmud is in here.

A locked chest is hidden under the curtains. It contains 328 dinars, 440 dirham and two carved pieces of jade (worth 200 dinars each). If the corsair ship is at sea, the chest is missing (Mahmud takes it with him).

24. Ahmed's Room.

This chamber is rather spartan, with only a narrow bed, a low table with a sitting cushion and a chest as furnishings.

The chest contains 56 dinars and a small amber statuette (worth 250 dinars), as well as assorted clothes. If Ahmed escaped the PCs earlier in the adventure (see "The Past Returns"), he is found here.

25. Privy. This very clean room is empty except for a brass disk lying on the floor. The disk covers a 1′ diameter hole. A minor enchantment keeps the room smelling perpetually fresh.

26. Hallway. A faint, vertical blue line can be seen on the walls here from 10′ away, on a roll of 2 or less on a d10. The line is a warning enchantment, which rings a loud bell-like tone whenever someone moves across it without saying "jawaz." It can be removed by a

successful *dispel magic* against a 7th-level caster.

If the PCs trigger this trap, they hear a door opening and then an angry shout coming from around the corner, saying "Damn it, boy, how many more times do I have to tell you—say the word as you go down the stairs!" A boy's voice then says, "Yes, master." One round later, Tagu comes to investigate (see area 28).

27. Achbar's Sitting Room.

> Intricately woven carpets cover the floor, heaps of cushions lie here and there, and deep red billowing curtains catch the sea breeze in front of the arched windows. A shining golden water pipe stands next to one of the piles of cushions, a low mahogany table by its side laden with various pouches. A small bookcase stands against the southern wall. Several shelves on the western wall display a large collection of glorious shells.

The water pipe is worth 750 dinars, the carpets roughly 100 dinars each (there are six of them). The pouches on the table are marked "dukhan," and contain various types of tobacco. The bookcase contains mundane books only, on such subjects as architecture and herbalism. The shells are Achbar's private collection, and are worth 800 dinars to another collector.

28. Apprentice's Room.

> This is a small, well-furnished room, containing a narrow bed, a low desk and a double arched window overlooking the bay. On the desk lies an open book.

If the PCs have not triggered the trap in area 24, Tagu (Samia's page from the caravan) is here. Achbar captured him together with the majority of the travelers and recognized his potential as a mage. Achbar then decided to take him on as an apprentice. Tagu went along with the scheme in the hope that he'd be able to help his mistress, but Achbar has kept a tight rein on him.

Tagu: AL CG; AC 9; MV 12; 0-level; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg unarmed; D 15, C 16, I 16; ML 5; clothing.

Tagu has a lot of important information for the PCs, some of which they may already know. He knows the real purpose of the caravan and reveals this to the PCs. He also tells them that Achbar long ago had a vision that he would die by sand, and that only water could save him. This is why he always carries a flask of water with him.

29. The Laboratory. This door is locked with a good quality lock.

> The dim light permeating this room seems to come from three cloth-covered items. Everywhere you look you see tables full of glassware, bubbling retorts, and jars filled with curious liquids. Heaps of parchments cover whatever desk space is left. Drying bundles of herbs hang from the ceiling in several places, and a strange animal skeleton mounted on a wire frame stands in the corner near several arcane charts on the southern wall. A coppery statue leans against a wall near the entrance.

This is Achbar's workplace. Here he crafts poisons and other sundry items. The parchments are his notes, and prominently visible on one table stands his latest experiment: a liquid which turns any non-organic solid it touches into an organic solid. A wooden bottle sits nearby, filled with the liquid and proof of its efficacy at the same time. The notes are splotched, and the procedure is in shorthand, but any wizard of 3rd level or higher is able to decipher enough to determine the liquid's power. In among the notes somewhere is the procedure for creating, a deadly magical poison which cannot be negated by anything less than a *heal* spell followed by a *neutralize poison*, or a *wish* or *limited wish*.

All the labels on the jars with components are written in shorthand, so messing around in the laboratory is dangerous. Only a wizard of 7th level or higher with the alchemy proficiency could make sense of most of the things here, and then only after a month's study. If all of the laboratory's contents were crated and sold together, they might fetch up to 5,000 dinars from an interested wizard—but all sorts of things might go wrong during the packing. You are encouraged to be devious.

The lighting is provided by three glass spheres with *continual light* cast on them, which are covered by silk cloths.

Standing on one of the desks is a *potion of health*, clearly marked. If Achbar has captured Samia, the *veil of desert dryness* lies next to it, together with a page of notes on how the *veil* functions. Among the papers there is a cleric's scroll with *obscurement* and *raise dead* (at 9th level); anyone searching has a 10% cumulative chance per turn to find it.

The coppery statue near the entrance is actually a copper automaton, which Achbar is studying. As an experiment, he has instructed it to guard the laboratory and kill any living being that it sees—Achbar expects it to kill a few mice at least. The automaton is strictly forbidden to damage the laboratory equipment. It animates five rounds after any PCs enter the laboratory.

Copper Automaton: INT low; AL N; AC 3; MV 9; HD 6; hp 38; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1–6/1–6 or 2–12/2–12; SA heat; SD immune to mind affecting spells; MR nil; SZ M; ML 20; XP 650; MC13. After a single round of combat, the automaton's fists start to glow red-hot, giving it an extra 1–6 hp damage per strike.

30. Chamber by the Reservoir.

> This room is empty and dark, except for a chest sitting on the floor by the western wall.

The western wall to this room is illusory; anything touching it passes straight through. Note that the illusion does not vanish when touched. Anything passing through will end up in the water of the reservoir, as there is nothing to stand on on the other side!

The chest is locked and trapped with a poison needle (type B). The trap is not sprung if the key is used. The chest is securely bolted to the floor and contains a small silk bag containing 100 dinars, a pouch with three matched aquamarines (worth 500 dinars each), a jambiya, a watertight box (empty) and a scroll scribed with *water breathing* (at 8th level).

31. The Treasury. This room has a magical door, made of black wood and bound with brass. It has no handle, lock, or any visible hinges. It opens when told to open in Midani, but one must specifically address the door. Merely saying "open" somewhere near it is not enough. The door is totally impervious to magic, including *knock* spells, and it magically repairs itself each round. (If it suffers over 50 hp damage in one round, it is destroyed).

This oddly-shaped chamber contains a number of bulging sacks lying directly opposite the door. A table laden with stacks of dinars and gems and various other odds and ends stands to the right, while on the left four boxes, a chest, and two large bundles sit on the floor. The room feels crowded. It is lit by a glowing globe dangling from a chain in the middle of the ceiling.

The sacks contain 500 coins each, totalling 1,000 dinars, 3,500 dirham and 6,000 bits. On the table lie a further 1,438 dinars, 361 dirham, and 853 bits, all well polished, as well as the following cut gemstones: two banded agates, three turquoises, a moss agate (10 dinars), a bloodstone, two moonstones (50), six white pearls, a garnet (100), a black pearl (500) and a fire opal (1,000). Also on the table lie the following magical items: a well-made and obviously expensive *scimitar +1, +4 vs. reptiles*, a *rope of climbing* and a box containing four blocks of *incense of meditation*.

The boxes contain spices and rare herbs such as frankincense, cloves, cinnamon, and myrrh; these are worth 750 dinars to a spice merchant. The chest contains six small tuns of aromatic oils, worth 50 dinars per tun. The bundles are large and impressive carpets, worth some 300 dinars each.

The globe lighting the room is a glass sphere with a *continual light* spell on it. The dome of the ceiling is 15′ high.

32. Achbar's Study.

The floor of this room is covered by one huge carpet, and a large, ceiling-to-floor cabinet placed against the western wall is filled with scrolls. A second cabinet next to the first holds a number of books and drawers behind glass doors. A small square table holds a carafe and two goblets. Three elaborate golden standing lamps light this room.

At the room's southern end stands a large desk, behind which sits an old man, clad in an ornate dolman and wearing a turban. On the desk lie many scrolls—and the jewel rose!

The cabinet is locked and holds Achbar's spellbook, which is trapped with *explosive runes* and contains the following spells as well as the ones he has memorized: *float*, identify, read magic; continual light, misdirection, true bearing*; explosive runes, water breathing; shatterhull*, wall of ice; animate dead.* (Spells marked with an asterisk are from the *Arabian Adventures* book.) A thick tome on ancient jewelry has a leather marker in it, by a page describing the ruby rose. On the previous page there is the full text of the Legend of Iago the Proud, plus a drawing of this supposedly legendary figure (which the PCs might recognize, at your option, as the holy man from the desert or as the beggar from the bazaar in Jumlat, or both).

The desk holds a bag with 116 dinars and 184 dirham, as well as a scroll case with a wizard's scroll containing *magic missile, continual light* and *shatterhull** (at 9th level).

The old man behind the desk is Achbar. Unless the PCs have been very quiet in approaching this room and opening the door, Achbar will have heard them and cast *mirror image*. He will also have taken the jewel rose. In this case, modify the second paragraph of the text as is appropriate. If the PCs have been very quiet, allow them a chance to sneak off with the jewel. An *unseen servant* spell might do very nicely here.

33. Achbar's Bedroom.

This room contains a large bed hung with elaborate curtains. Next to it stands a low, square table with a goblet and a clay jug on it. In the eastern corner of the room stands a heavy, carved wooden cabinet.

The cabinet contains clothing, mostly abas, but a few jellabas, dishdashas, dolmans and keffiyehs as well. A few simple agals complete Achbar's wardrobe. All are of excellent cut and quality. The jug contains water.

Concluding the Adventure

The timing of the confrontation with Achbar can make or break this adventure. The exact circumstances should vary according to when the PCs make their assault on the lair, but here are some suggestions: if the PCs make their assault on the evening of the

Continued on page 65

THE MURDER OF MAURY MILLER

BY CAMERON WIDEN

Death and taxes

Artwork by Dan Burr

Cameron writes: "I graduated from high school a year and a half ago. My ambitions include pursuing a career as an anthropologist, SF writer, English professor, and/or industrial-metal bass guitarist. I'd like to thank Mya, my parents, and all the guys for their support and encouragement."

"The Murder of Maury Miller" is an introductory-level AD&D® game scenario for 3–6 PCs of 1st level. Including one or two PCs of 2nd level should not unbalance the adventure. Any mix of races and classes is suitable for the adventure, since it is geared mainly toward problem-solving and role-playing.

Because there is little treasure to be gained in this module, good-aligned PCs are highly recommended. Neutral PCs will have trouble finding the motivation to complete the adventure. Also, because there is much PC-NPC interaction, the PCs should have well-developed personalities, appearances, and other traits. Each PC should also begin with standard equipment, but no horse.

The adventure takes place in the hamlet of Lowick in the Kingdom of Cobbish, a tiny fiefdom far from the major happenings of the world. It could be adapted, however, to almost any fantasy campaign with few alterations. The FORGOTTEN REALMS®, GREYHAWK®, and MYSTARA® settings are all very appropriate for this adventure; if the PCs are all non-regent characters, the adventure suits the BIRTHRIGHT™ setting also.

For the Players

The adventure begins with the PCs on the road, traveling from the village of Burnham to the city of Brandmore, perhaps to seek their fortune in the big city. Read or paraphrase the following:

> Once again, it is a beautiful afternoon in the Kingdom of Cobbish. In no hurry to reach your destination, you stroll leisurely along the River Road, soaking up the sunshine and allowing your stomachs to digest your meager supper. The sun, barely two hours from sinking below the horizon, shines down on the river that parallels the road, creating a spectacle worthy of the most gifted painter.
>
> Although the largest in the kingdom, the River Road is still small and uncrowded compared to the highways in the larger kingdoms to the south.

Therefore, little distracts you from enjoying the day, until you notice a crossroads in the distance. There you see a heated argument between a halfling child and a wagon master.

The halfling is a youngster by the name of Snags Thistlethorn, the son of a farmer in Lowick. He was hired by Shepton, the mayor of the hamlet, to stand at the crossroads every day and question the passers-by in hope of finding heroes to bring back to the village. He takes his mission very seriously and has faithfully stopped and interrogated every person who has passed during the past week.

Snags Thistlethorn: AL NG; AC 10; MV 5; 0-level halfling; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 6, D 14, C 14, I 11, W 8, Ch 15; ML 5; sling, 7 cp, assorted kid-stuff (string, pretty stones, bugs, etc.)

Unfortunately, not everyone Snags has encountered has appreciated his youthful exuberance. The wagon master the PCs see arguing with the lad, for instance, is a particularly sour old coot. Indeed, as the PCs come within earshot of the crossroads, they begin to hear bits of the argument between the two.

"Look, runt," shouts the teamster, rising from his seat atop the turnip cart. "I don't need this. It's been a long day already, and I don't need no lousy kid keeping me from my supper. Now get out of the way, or I'll grind you into the dirt, young'un or no!"

The halfling boy, looking very much the peasant in his homespun trousers, plain tunic, and straw hat, doesn't move from his position in front of the snorting mules. "But sir," he pleads, wringing his hands in distress. "I just wanna find out if you're one of them hero-types! It's been a whole week and I ain't found one yet. Mister Shepton's gonna be sore if I come home without any heroes again tonight."

"Well, I ain't no hero, and I don't give a diddly-dang who gets mad. If you ask me, you could use a good whuppin'! Now get out of my way!"

Reluctantly, the young halfling moves aside. Whipping his mules into action, the wagon master continues on his way, rolling right past you without so much as a glance.

Wagon master: AL N; AC 9; MV 12; 0-level human; hp 8; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1–2 (whip) or by weapon; S 15, D 11, C 12, I 9, W 9, Ch 7; ML 8; whip, dagger, 14 gp.

When the PCs reach the crossroads, Snags notices them and comes trotting over. "Excuse me, sirs. But are you heroes? I need to find some."

Assuming the PCs answer in the affirmative, Snag's eyes light up like lanterns. "Wow! Really? Holy moly! Say, do you think you could come to my village? We really need some heroes." If the PCs are agreeable, Snags' face erupts into a huge grin. Grabbing the largest PC's sleeve, he begins bounding down the side road, which leads, according to the signpost, to a place called Lowick.

If the PCs deny that they are heroes, Snag persists. "Are you sure? You look an awful lot like heroes. Maybe you're just not heroes *yet*. We sure do need help." In short, Snags says anything he can imagine to persuade the PCs to return to Lowick with him.

For the Dungeon Master

Less than a year ago, Lowick was a happy, prosperous little community. While not rich by any means, its dual incomes of fishing and farming were enough to ensure a comfortable life for its citizens. The hamlet was small enough that each person knew everyone else, and there was a general feeling of neighborly camaraderie among them. Sheltered as it was, its inhabitants were well-removed from the great wars of the past, and they knew nothing of true hardship except what little they heard from the people they dealt with when bringing their wares to market in the city.

When news reached the village of the old tax collector's death last spring, no one was particularly surprised or saddened. The old man, who was in his late eighties, was not much liked in the hamlet. He was, after all, the tax collector. But neither was he truly disliked; the peasants realized long ago that he was just a part of life. He came, did his business, and left. No one in Lowick hated the man for doing his job.

When the new tax collector, a grossly fat, balding man named Rander, came riding into town, however, the peasants immediately knew that change was in the air. Right behind Rander was a gang of four rough-looking men-at-arms who immediately spread out and began to harass the people. They informed the citizens of the new "Private Defense Tax," to take effect immediately. Though more than a little unhappy and reluctant to pay, everyone did, thinking it to be just another tax imposed by the king.

Naive and unworldly as they were, none of the peasants realized that "Private Defense Tax" was just a euphemism for "protection racket." The truth behind the new "tax" soon became clear, though, when a farmer from the area was unable to pay. Two of Rander's thugs beat him while the others set fire to his home. The man's neighbors got the point, and no one was late with their payments again.

Maury Miller, the owner and proprietor of the area's only grain mill, had had enough. Maury knew everyone in the township better than most, for everyone either had their grain milled or bought flour at his mill. The assault of one of his friends added to the blatant unfairness and dishonestly already displayed by the tax man drove Maury and his closest farmer friends to action.

In a series of late-night meetings, Maury and his friends discussed finding a solution to this problem. On the surface, it seemed there was no easy answer: getting rid of the tax man should take no more than reporting him to the King's Representative for the area. Unfortunately, Rander the Tax Collector was also Rander the King's Representative. And as he had made clear to several of the peasants from the outset, the only way to go around the Representative was to get a special appointment with King Cobbisham himself. No one in the village, not even Mayor Shepton, felt that he had the slightest hope of getting an audience with the king—a viewpoint that Rander helped foster with stories of mountains of red tape and seas of bureaucracy to be negotiated. He painted a very unflattering picture of the king indeed, telling the peasants that he was a nasty, ill-tempered old man prone to tossing anyone who displeased him into the dungeons. The truth behind these lies is quite different, as the PCs may discover.

With their hopes of using legal and political machinations against the tax

collector dashed, Maury and his companions turned their minds to less peaceful and proper methods. They set a date for their stand against the tax collector and met at the mill at night.

When next the tax man came to Maury's mill, he was greeted by a group of nearly 20 angry peasants armed with pitchforks and axes, fronted by Maury himself. Stepping forward and swallowing loudly, Maury declared in a firm voice that the people of Lowick would no longer pay the unfair "Private Defense Tax" and would henceforth pay only the King's Tax. Clearly outmatched, Rander simply smiled his oily smile and rode off. Satisfied that they would no more be bothered by the renegade tax collector, the peasants had a small celebration and went home.

But, of course, Rander wasn't about to let that be the end of the matter.

That night, Rander and his goons returned to the mill and murdered Maury, both as punishment for his involvement in the protest and as a warning to other villagers who might have rebellious thoughts. Maury was never seen gain. When Lagus the Weaver arrived at the mill early the next morning to buy some flour, he found the mill empty and sealed by the King's Representative, with the justification that Maury had failed to pay his taxes and fled, and the property had been repossessed by the king. A week later, when Rander rode into town and announced through his greasy smile that the Private Defense Tax had doubled, no one said a word.

Since no one in the township knew how to operate the mill (and could not legally have broken the seal even if they did), the farmers now also had the added expense of carting their grain to Brandmore. Maury's mill fell into disrepair.

As if having to haul their grain away to be milled and paying protection money weren't enough, the poor citizens of Lowick soon found that they had a new threat to face: arson. A month or so after Maury's disappearance, small fires began to occur: tool sheds, chicken coops, and other minor outbuildings were the first to go. Since then, the fires have been getting bigger, more frequent, and closer to the village proper with each occurrence.

At first, the peasants thought the fires had been the work of Rander's thugs, out for an evening of violent fun at the hamlet's expense. Infrequent sightings of the culprit, however, showed that they were dealing with a single adversary. And as the arsonist became more brazen in his endeavors, some of the peasants who spotted him came to realize that this was no human villain—the arsonist was a living, walking scarecrow!

Eventually the problem became so severe that Mayor Shepton was forced to do something before the culprit began setting people's homes on fire. One day he approached Rander as the tax collector rode into town and told him that if the peasants were going to pay a Private Defense Tax, they expected to be defended. Rander simply laughed, "Solve your own problems, shorty. I've got bigger fish to fry." Following Rander's advice, Shepton hired Snags Thistlethorn to watch the crossroads each day, trying to find heroes to aid the village.

The firebug plaguing Lowick is none other than Maury Miller himself. Foully murdered by Rander and his thugs, Maury's restless spirit cannot pass on until the tax man is brought to justice. Since his death, Maury has been possessing the bodies of normal scarecrows in the area, making trouble in hopes that he can lure one of the peasants back to the scene of the

crime. Once there, he hopes the person discovers the crime. Armed with physical evidence, the peasants could then gain an audience with the king and have Rander arrested.

Unfortunately, Maury's plan has met with little success, because the farmers are too frightened to chase a walking scarecrow through dark fields late at night. With the PCs in town, however, things may change for the spirit of Maury Miller.

The Village of Lowick

Just as the sun is setting, you crest the last hill and begin to make your way into the hamlet of Lowick. The road on which you stand deteriorated the farther you traveled from the highway, becoming in places nothing but a rutted track. But here again it becomes clear and defined.

By all appearances, the village is a normal, peaceful little community. Nestled between two large hills, Lowick presents itself as the stereotypical sleepy peasant town. On the far side of the village lies a small lake, and a creek runs from it through the town. You see several rowboats and nets hung to dry on the shore.

The houses of the village are relatively few, but varied. From this vantage, you see straight, wooden, human houses; squat, dome-shaped halfling homes; and even a few larger buildings that look like shops or inns. All but a few are aglow with candlelight, and most show signs of minor activity. Smoke rises lazily from the chimneys, and as you move closer to the town, your noses catch the scent of cooking food.

What few people you see are either farmers on their way home from the fields or children playing in the streets. When they notice you, their eyes suddenly grow suspicious, and they rush away as if suddenly remembering an important errand.

Lowick is a tiny village in a tiny kingdom. It is a picturesque hamlet nearly two hours by foot from the River Road, the closest major thoroughfare. While it may appear quaint and homey on the surface, the hardships brought on by the tax man are visible to anyone who looks closely. The villagers, disillusioned by the newfound violence in their community, have become withdrawn and distrustful of strangers. Unless otherwise noted, they are polite to the PCs, but no more friendly.

Another sign of the troubles plaguing Lowick is the fact that a few empty houses dot the landscape, both in and out of the village proper. Several of the inhabitants either grew tired of surrendering the last of their coins to the tax man or couldn't pay and fled. The vacant homes and farmsteads are their legacy.

Snags leads the PCs directly to the home of Mayor Shepton, unless they express an interest in looking about the village itself, in which case Snags happily leads them about and shows them the sights. He answers general questions about why he brought the PCs to town. ("There's some guy that's been burning buildings and stuff.") But Snags doesn't know any specific information. ("Whose buildings? Gee, I dunno for sure.")

One thing notable by its absence is any sort of an inn or tavern. Queries in this direction are answered with a chuckle. Because the hamlet lies so far off the beaten track and there are few visitors, there is no way a village of this size could support an inn. Any socializing in the town occurs in private homes or, on special occasions, at the Town Green.

Lowick Map Key

A. Stump's Trading Post.

From a distance, this building appears to be either a large house or a store. Upon closer examination, you see that it is both. In the window, assorted barrels, sacks, hanks of rope, and various food items are visible. A painted sign above the door identifies it as Stump's Trading Post, and the second floor is taken up with what must be living quarters.

On the porch recline four crusty old men, each dressed in standard peasant garb of homespun clothes and leather boots. One draws intermittently on a large pipe. They argue animatedly, but the subject of their discussion is not audible from this distance.

The old men are Gus, Clem, Toman, and Stump, the owner of the trading post. They are regular fixtures in Lowick. Rarely are they found anywhere but sitting on the porch of Stump's Trading Post, arguing about everything from the weather to farming to distant wars. This evening, they are comparing their various (and obviously exaggerated) hunting stories. They continue to argue, completely oblivious to the PCs, until one of the heroes speaks up. When one does, the old men all fall silent and stare suspiciously at the PCs from beneath bushy eyebrows. Stump is the only one who speaks to the PCs, and he does so reluctantly. If the PCs show an interest in buying anything, however, Stump's demeanor abruptly changes, and he becomes downright friendly. He chats affably with the PCs about outside news and makes idle banter, asking what brings them to town.

The Trading Post carries all the items in the Household Provisioning section and most of the items in the Miscellaneous Equipment section of the *Player's Handbook*, with the following exceptions: bolt cases, crampons, grappling hooks, map cases, merchant's scales, greek fire, quivers, signet rings, or any item costing more than 10 gp. Because of the hard times in the village, Stump has been forced to increase his prices; all items sell for 150% normal list price.

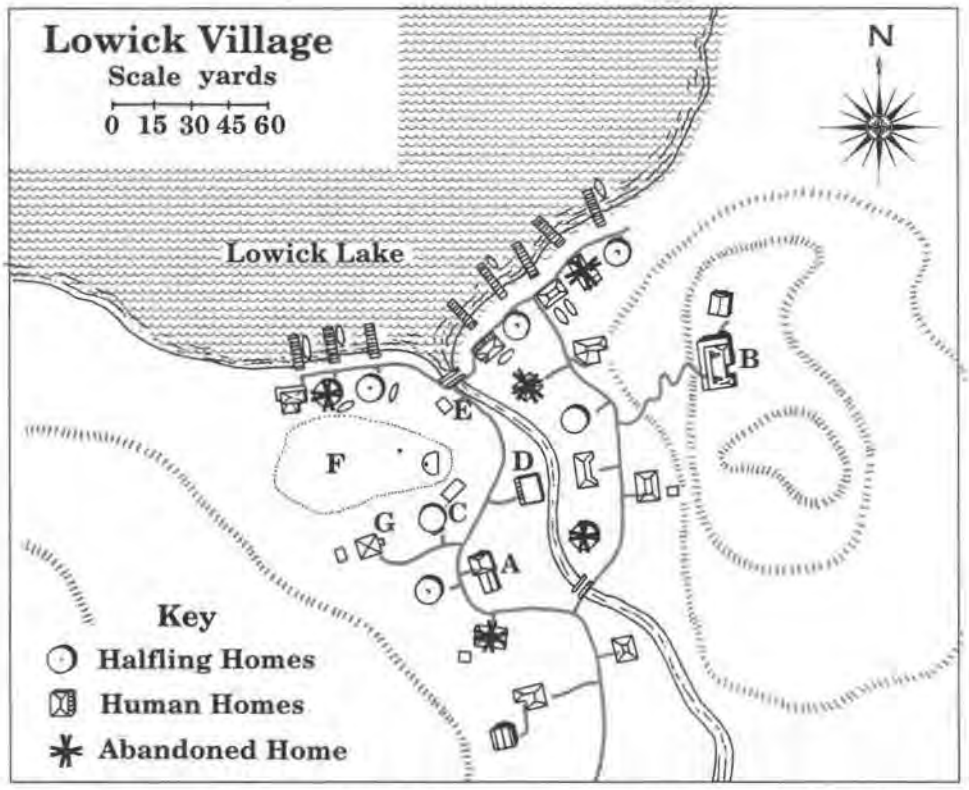
True to its name, Stump's Trading post also barters for items. Again, the equivalent value of items offered for trade must be 150% greater in Stump's favor.

Stump: AL NG; AC 10; MV 10; 0-level human; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 8, D 9, C 9, I 13, W 15, Ch 13; ML 5; dagger, 15 gp in silver and copper; NWP appraising.

As the PCs are leaving, they hear over their shoulders, "Well, Clem, I tell ya: a three-foot-long rabbit is fine, if you're looking for small game. But did I ever tell you boys about the time . . ."

B. Shepton's Home.

On the hill west of town, you notice a large house, sheltered among a copse on the southern slope of the hill. It managed to escape your attention when you first entered the village.



This is the home of Shepton the Bard, Lowick's mayor. For more details on the house, see "Meeting with Shepton."

C. Weaver.

A small, stone, dome-shaped halfling home, this building is unremarkable but for two things: the large wooden shed out back, and a sign at the end of the path, reading "Lagus' Weavings."

A weaver of only minor skill, Lagus Weaver makes most of his money weaving fishnets and coarse sacking material. What he lacks in ability, however, Lagus more than makes up in politeness, charm, and personal warmth. If he spies the PCs on the road outside his home, he invites them in to sit for tea with him, his equally affable wife, and their two adorable children. The consummate host, Lagus plies the PCs with delicious cakes and hot tea until they decide to leave, asking only conversation and news of the outside world in return.

Lagus answers any of the PCs' questions about the town, and he clams up only if they begin to question him about the new tax man or any events related to him. Lagus is terrified of Rander.

Lagus: AL LG; AC 10; MV 6; 0-level halfling; hp 6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 9, D 8, C 14, I 11, W 12, Ch 16; ML 6; knife, 7 sp.

D. Smithy.

This large house adjacent to the creek appears to be the site of furious activity. A horde of screaming children seethes about the yard, all of them playing some unfathomable game involving a great deal of running and yelling. Through the front window, you see a tired-looking middle-aged woman fussing over a stove. From a shed next to the house comes a loud clanging. The source of the noise is immediately apparent: the whoosh of bellows and the thick black smoke pouring from the chimney could only mean a smithy.

The house and smithy belong to Fingam Smith, the town's sole blacksmith. A generally likeable and decent man, Fingam is the father of 11 children and the husband of the woman spied through the window. While polite and approachable, Fingam does not become too friendly with the PCs. He has his family to look after and will do nothing he thinks might earn him the enmity of Rander—including helping the PCs in any way. His wife and children act similarly.

Fingam Smith: AL LG; AC 9; MV 12; 0-level human; hp 10; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1 (hammer) or by weapon type; S 17; D 15, C 12, I 11, W 12, Ch 10; ML 14; hammer, assorted tools, 5 gp.

E. Salt Warehouse.

As you approach the intersection of the wide paths that pass for streets in this village, you see what appears to be a medium-sized shed set apart from the other buildings. It is wooden and well-made, and the door is secured with a large wooden bar.

This shed is the communal salt-storage warehouse for the entire village. Every year, one of the fisherman from the village is elected to make the journey to the salt mines in the south. It is a journey of many days, and while the fisherman chosen for the duty is away, the others in the village care for his family and give up a share of all the fish caught. In return, the salt from the mines is considered village property and is usable by all fishermen in preserving their catch.

If the PCs enter the shed, they find several large barrels of salt, a metal scoop, and nothing more.

F. Village Green.

This is a small, oblong field surrounded by a low fence. A small stage with a podium stands at the eastern end. A bare maypole juts from the ground in the middle of a circle of bare earth.

This field is used for town meetings, holiday celebrations, and the like. The last time it was used was more than a month ago, when Shepton gave a concert here. It is now abandoned, except by the children who sometimes use it as a playground.

G. Leatherworker/Tannery

At the end of this street you find a medium-sized dwelling. From where you stand, you see children playing in the field behind the house. Above the door of the building is a sign reading simply: "Leather." Next to the house is a large shop.

The leatherworker is a man named Poggo Lundy, a whipcord-thin, balding man. He works side-by-side with his wife, a huge woman named Dunny. Both are extremely surly and have eternally foul expressions on their faces. They treat everyone—villagers and strangers alike—with rudeness and impatience.

Poggo: AL LE; AC 9; MV 12; 0-level human; hp 8; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 13, D 14, C 9, I 15, W 9, Ch 6; ML 12.

Dunny: AL N; AC 10; MV 10; 0-level human; hp 6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 14, D 10, C 10, I 11, W 11, Ch 7; ML 12.

Both Poggo and Dunny carry knives but nothing else of interest. They are capable of fixing, but not making, leather armor. They do so only for a grossly inflated price (300% list).

Meeting with Shepton

Shepton the Bard, Mayor of Lowick, has led a life much more interesting than that of any other inhabitant of Lowick. Born and raised in the hamlet, he spent most of his early life there. However, when he was just a young lad of 30 or so (a mere whelp by halfling standards), he decided, as many a brash youth has done, to leave home and seek his fortune in the big city. Packing up his belongings, he traveled south and then east, to Gundershire, the capital of Cobbish. Among his few possessions was a mandolin given to him by his father when he was just a toddler. Twenty years of practice had paid off, and Shepton was by now quite an accomplished musician. He hoped to audition for and become a member of the Gundershire guild of Musicians and Players.

True to his ambitions, Shepton tried for a place in the guild and gained it. One thing he didn't know before he tried for his apprenticeship, however, was that in Gundershire the terms "Musicians' Guild" and "Thieves' Guild" were synonymous.

Instead of leaving the guild when he discovered its secret, Shepton stayed on, for he heard that thieves' guilds often provided their members with proper educations. Sure enough, Shepton soon began receiving instruction in history, philosophy, language arts, and—of course—music. To earn his keep, Shepton was also made to learn certain thiefly abilities. He didn't mind that facet of his lifestyle; after all, the only people that he had to rob were those who could afford it, and he earned enough money to send some back to his parents in Lowick.

To make a long story short, Shepton eventually joined an adventuring band and was involved in several very successful ventures. Soon, though, he tired of the adventuring lifestyle and longed for the comforts of home. Returning to Lowick a fairly wealthy halfling, Shepton built himself a large, comfortable house on the hill above town and settled down for a life of leisure and relaxation. Hearing of his campaigns and heroic deeds, the townsfolk voted Shepton in as mayor. The moderate stipend afforded him and the mostly enjoyable work as mayor agreed with his tastes very well, and he has continued in this capacity up to the present.

Shepton takes great delight in entertaining, especially for fellow adventurers. There is nothing he would rather do than spend an evening in his study with colleagues, swapping tales of derring-do over a glass of wine. To this end, he often invites his old adventuring companions, some of whom have become quite powerful, to his home for a visit.

> After a short walk up the hill, you arrive at the gate. Letting yourselves in, you approach the door of the house. The sun has gone, and evening gives way to night. Shaded by several massive trees, the house might appear dark were it not for the light of many candles and lamps pouring from the windows. As you get closer, you catch the strains of a pleasant melody wafting through the open windows to your left. Peeking through the glass, you see a smiling halfling seated at a large harpsichord, apparently the source of the music.

If the PCs knock at the door, they are greeted by a rotund, gray-haired halfling woman. This is Mrs. Teubo, Shepton's housekeeper. After politely asking the PCs their business, she gives Snags a gold coin and sends the lad on his way home before escorting the PCs into the library. If there are more than four PCs present, Mrs. Teubo brings in extra chairs, always leaving one of the overstuffed armchairs free for "Mister Shepton."

After serving tea and cakes (both excellent), Mrs. Teubo goes into the kitchen to prepare a late supper for the PCs, and Shepton arrives.

> As you sit sipping your tea and chatting idly, the door opens and in walks a stout halfling. By far the best-dressed person you've seen since entering Lowick, Shepton sports velvet trousers and a silk shirt with buttons that look like pure silver. He has muttonchop sideburns and a good haircut.

Shepton introduces himself all around, then produces a fine pipe and pouch of tobacco. After offering the pouch around, he lights his pipe and smokes. For the first 15 minutes of the visit, Shepton sips tea and sticks to small talk. Then he sets aside his teacup, signalling that it's time to get down to business.

> "Well," says Shepton, toying with his pipe. "I suppose you have all gathered that this town is in desperate need of champions. You see, it seems we have a problem with this arsonist."
>
> Mrs. Teubo enters to announce that dinner is ready, and Shepton stands. "We can discuss the rest over dinner. Please, follow me."

The PCs can ask Shepton any questions they wish, and he answers truthfully and as completely as possible. He personally has not seen the scarecrow responsible for the fires, and he suspects that the stories about it are just the results of the peasants' overexcited imaginations. He advises the PCs to take the rumor of a living scarecrow with a grain of salt.

The one subject that Shepton shies away from is the village's problem with Rander. Like everyone else in the village, Shepton has felt the sting of the tax man's scheme, and he also fears violence if he is found spreading the truth about Rander. Ex-adventurer or not, Shepton would still be just one halfling against a gang of armed hooligans.

As for a reward, Shepton tells the PCs up front that the town hasn't much money. He can afford a 50-gp reward, plus room and board for the duration of the PCs' stay. He can also supply them with any equipment available to him, but he shakes his head apologetically if asked about a horse.

There are no horses in Lowick, though the PCs may borrow a donkey if they wish.

If asked why he doesn't deal with the problem himself, or if asked to join the PCs, Shepton declines politely, saying that his adventuring days are long past. He has no desire to get involved in such things again.

After dinner, Shepton tells the PCs that they are welcome to stay in his house or take up residence in one of the abandoned homes throughout the township. If they desire to stay in Shepton's home, the mayor shows them to their rooms upstairs. If required, Mrs. Teubo can find as many extra blankets as are needed. When everything is organized, Shepton bids the PCs a good night and retires to his room across the hall.

Shepton: AL LG; AC 6; MV 6; B3; HP 15; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 8, D 17, C 12, I 13, W 10, Ch 17; ML 15; *dagger +1, ring of protection +1.*

The Attack

Around one o'clock in the morning, the PCs' slumber is disturbed by a loud pounding on the front door (assuming they reside with Shepton) and the sound of people shouting outside. A quick glance out the window shows them what's going on: On the other side of town, they see the glow of a huge fire and a bucket brigade forming. Seconds later, they hear the sound of booted feet pounding up the stairs and a frantic voice shouting, "Mister Shepton! Mister Shepton! There's another fire. It's the Dale house! It's going up!"

If they aren't up and dressed already, Shepton gets the PCs out of bed and tells them that it is time for them to start earning their keep. Minutes later, they all arrive at the burning house. Trying to save it now is obviously a lost cause, for it is completely engulfed in flame. The bucket brigade concentrates mainly on keeping the neighboring homes from catching fire.

Those people not involved in the bucket brigade mill around at the end of the path, peering out into the dark fields and pointing. A shadowy figure is barely visible standing near the shore of the lake, facing the town. Just as the PCs arrive, it begins to move away from the lake, into the moonlit fields.

If the PCs remain behind to investigate the ruins, they find little to point them in the direction of the arsonist. Large, booted footprints decorate the soil around the north wall of the house, and the remains of a shattered, twisted lantern lie against the rubble of the same. Otherwise, there is nothing that might give them clues as to the identity of the culprit.

The Chase

If the PCs decide not to give chase tonight, this scene is repeated every couple of nights until they do. Maury attacks homes at random, each time using the same method: a lantern grenade tossed against the wall of a house.

If they try tracking the scarecrow during the day, the PCs go only as far as the road, where the trail disappears. When they do follow the scarecrow, read or paraphrase the following to them:

> After nearly half an hour of jogging, you are exhausted. Twenty minutes ago, you came out of the fields and onto a road, but the shadowy figure merely continued to lead you on down it. You all stop for a moment at the top of a small rise, unable to go on, when an eerie, rhythmic creaking comes to you over the fields.

Your quarry pauses at the top of the next rise and turns around. You strain to see through the gloom to catch a glimpse of his face to see if you recognize the arson. But it is not one of the villagers; you stare into the unnatural, flickering grin of a scarecrow! The creature turns and bounds down the far hill, leaving you alone with the wind and the rhythmic creaking.

Scarecrow (Maury): INT high; AL NG; AC 8; MV 20; HD 2; hp 13; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1–4; SZ M; ML 10.

Under no circumstances does the scarecrow attack the PCs or peasants. Maury has nothing against the villagers; he sets fire to their sheds and barns only to gain their attention and lure them to the mill.

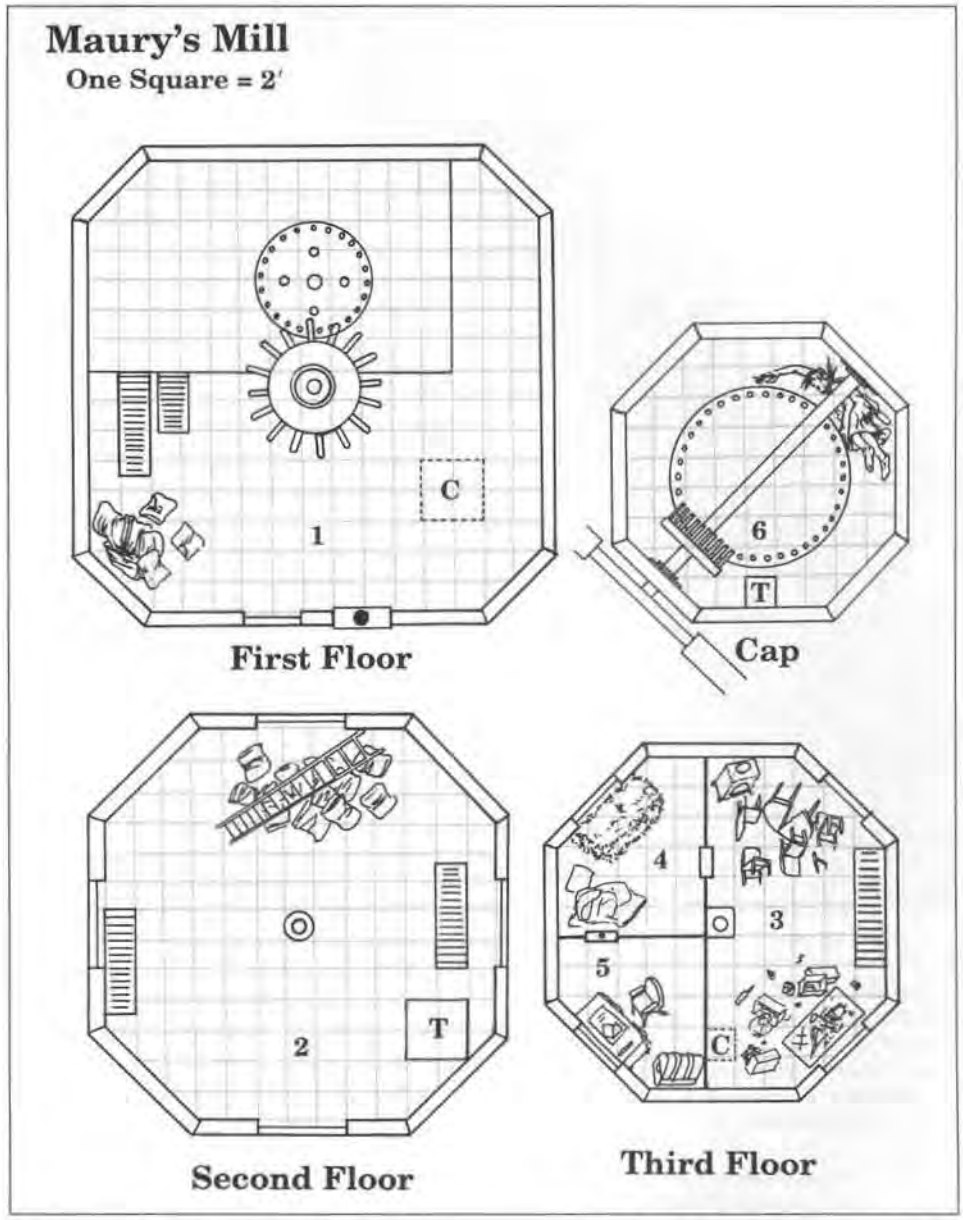
If the PCs manage to destroy the scarecrow from afar, Maury simply possesses another one the next night and continues his fire attacks. If the DM prefers to play out the chase rather than simply read a description of it to the players, he should keep in mind that the scarecrow can probably move much faster than any PC. But Maury tries not to elude the PCs but to lead them to the mill.

Hot on the trail of the scarecrow, you crest the final hill and look across a small hollow. On the hill before you stands a windmill, silhouetted in the moonlight. The tattered vanes hang in rags, and the roof is spotted with holes from missing shingles. The turning of the gutted vanes sets up the low creaking that you heard from the road. Windows game at you like open mouths from all three floors of the mill. Their shutters bang fitfully in the wind.

Looking quickly around, you discover that your prey is nowhere to be seen.

The Mill

The mill Maury owned was both his place of work and his home. A widower with no children, Maury threw himself into his work after the death of his wife. He knew nothing of engineering, carpentry, or stonemasonry, but he did know how the mill worked. He managed to keep it operational through a combination of ingenuity and good luck.



In the months after his death, however, Maury's makeshift repairs quickly fell apart until the windmill became the decrepit mess the PCs see before them.

The front door was boarded up by Rander and his men, and a faded and watermarked proclamation was nailed to the frame:

This Property and Building Have been Repossessed by the Office of the King's Representative of the Township of Lowick and Area in the Name of the King for Taxes Owing.

Rander
King's Representative

A PC with any sort of bureaucratic or legal background (a thief, for instance) knows that breaking such a seal is a criminal offense, and the offender could well end up in the royal dungeon.

Unless the PCs happen to have crowbars in their possession, however, entering the windmill is easiest through one of the windows. The first-floor window nearest the door is the most obvious choice. Those who choose to break down the door through main Strength must roll as if trying to open a barred door. Only the strongest PCs have even a small chance of breaking down the door without tools.

Player Handout #1

ACCOUNTS

Coming In		*Going Out*	
Gaver's Bakery (Burnham)	*100gp*	*Poggo, 2 sq. ft. leather*	*10gp*
Andrac, 1 sack	*10gp*	*Lagus, 100´ rope*	*25gp*
Manny, 25 mill	*5gp*	*Walsh, 3 fish*	*6cp*
Total	*115 gp*	*King's Tax*	*15gp*
		PD Tax	*245gp*
Savings		*TOTAL*	*295gp*
Bank of Gund	*215gp*		*6cp*
Mill	*300gp*		
Total	*515gp*		

1. Mill Room.

Shrouded in darkness, this floor is illuminated only by the light coming from the small window by the door. The whole floor is taken up by one large room, and the ceiling reaches up into the darkness far above your heads.

On a large platform on the opposite side of the room sits the millstone, slowly turning and making loud grinding noises. A staircase rises first to the top of the platform, then doubles back on itself to continue to the next floor. Something large rests in the corner to the left, hidden in the shadows.

Examination proves that the thing in the corner is nothing more sinister than several sacks of old, moldy grain. Any PC doing a thorough examination of the room can find a trap door set in the ceiling in the southeast corner. There is nothing else of interest on this floor.

2. Storage Room.

The noise from the millstone is less deafening here, but the floor and walls vibrate from the force. Pale moonlight creeps in on cat's paws from windows set in all four sides of the room. In the southwest corner, a trap door is set into the floor, and across the room you spy another staircase ascending to the next level, high above your heads. At the bottom of the opposite staircase lies another, larger pile of sacks, and against them leans a rickety wooden ladder. A thick drive-shaft runs from floor to ceiling, its slow revolution the only movement in the room.

In the southwest corner of the room, directly above the trap door, is a supernatural "cold spot." This is the exact place where Maury was hanged to death by Rander's thugs, and that small area is now noticeably colder than the rest of the mill. PCs performing a careful search of the room also find that directly above the cold spot hangs a large iron ring set into the ceiling, a short length of chopped-off rope still tied to it. The trap door and ring were used for lowering grain from the storage room to the mill room below, but it served Rander equally well as a makeshift gallows. The ladder was used by one of Rander's goons to climb up to the ring and tie the rope in place.

3. Maury's Living Room.

Although once probably a comfortable living room, this one now looks like the focus of a rampaging dragon. Overturned chairs and a table lie broken against the northern wall next to a battered wood stove. Under the window in the southeastern corner is a stout oak desk with what looks like the remains of a model ship crushed on top. The drawers have all been pulled out and emptied, and various delicate woodworking tools lie scattered about the floor, intermingled with the pieces of a fine wooden chess set. The window in the northeast corner is broken, and the door set into the western wall hangs by one hinge.

The only other thing of note in this room is a trap door set into the ceiling. It leads to the cap of the windmill. The ladder that used to ascend to the cap is downstairs, where it was left after Rander's men hanged Maury.

4. Bedroom. The only thing in this small chamber is a cheap straw mattress, from which the blankets have been torn and flung in the corner. A locked door in the southern wall leads to Maury's office.

5. Office.

In stark contrast to the last two rooms, this one is very neat and well-organized. A desk sits under the window in the southwestern corner, facing the road. A small chest rests next to it. Both appear to be in good shape, though they are slightly dusty.

While the chest may appear sound after cursory examination, close scrutiny shows deep scratches around the lock plate, indicating that it has been forced open. Indeed, if any PC opens it, he finds it bare.

The desk, on the other hand, is untouched. The drawers are unlocked and filled with invoices and records (see

Player Handout #1). Hidden in a secret compartment in the back is Maury's diary (see Player Handout #2).

6. The Cap.

Peeking through the trap door, you gain a rat's perspective of this small, circular room. You barely have time to swing your head about to survey the room, however, before your nostrils are assailed by a horrible stench. The smell of decaying flesh is so powerful that you must cover your face to stave off nausea. Holding your breath, you take a quick look around the dome.

A huge wooden cog, easily ten feet in diameter, occupies the center of the room. A large shaft bisects the room, jutting from the centerpoint of the vanes outside to where it is fixed on the opposite wall. A smaller wheel is attached to the shaft and intersects the larger wheel, somewhere off to your left. The only sound is a quiet rattle caused by the slow revolving of the mechanism.

Around the circumference of the room, off to the right, lies the decomposing body of Maury Miller. It lies beneath the spot where the shaft is attached to the wall, and it is not visible from the trap door.

The body is in poor condition, having lain here for four months. A moldy noose is tied about its neck, and its head lolls at a painful angle. It is dressed in a foul, rotten nightgown. If a PC examines the body, he must make a constitution check at –3 to avoid nausea.

Examining the body reveals nothing that is not also immediately obvious. There is nothing of interest or value in the pockets of the nightgown.

Pressing the Case

Armed with the evidence of Maury's murder (the invoices and diary, in combination with testimony by the village folk about Rander's protection scam—that is, if the PCs can convince the villagers to tell them the whole story about Rander), the PCs should by now have come to the conclusion that Maury was murdered by the corrupt tax collector. If not, the DM will have to improvise, perhaps having the PCs gain hints from the people of the village that they suspect Maury didn't just run away because he couldn't pay his taxes, and so on.

Player Handout #2

. . . night. I ended up mating him, but it was close, the Game went on for a good two hours before I finally pinned him down. Before he left, I made him promise me a rematch. No meeting tonight. The big one is happening tomorrow.

12–5–02

It worked! I can't believe it, but it worked! It went just the way we planned at our meetings. We met here an hour before he was to arrive. When he did, we told him off. Ha! The look on his face when he saw all of us lined up like that . . . It was priceless! He slunk off like a dog with its tail between its legs. Finally! It looks like we won't have to worry about him anymore.

Anyway, after the excitement, Anord stayed behind and we played a game of Nucks. I wiped the floor with him the first game, but the seco

Have to go. Heard a noise downstairs.

The PCs now have two obvious courses of action: either to bring the evidence before the King of Cobbish, or to confront the tax collector directly. Both possibilities are dealt with below. Note, however, that while the PCs are gone, the fire attacks continue until Rander is actually arrested.

Gundershire, the capital of Cobbish and the residence of King Cobbisham, is two days' journey by horse or four by foot. It is more a large town than a city, supporting a population of only 5,000. In all respects, it is a standard fantasy-milieu town, right down to the marketplace and the Drunken Dragon Inn. The DM is encouraged to develop the town further and include various encounters if he wishes to make the PCs' stay in Gundershire more interesting. Alternately, the DM may simply substitute an already-existing town for Gundershire, replacing the King of Cobbisham with another local ruler.

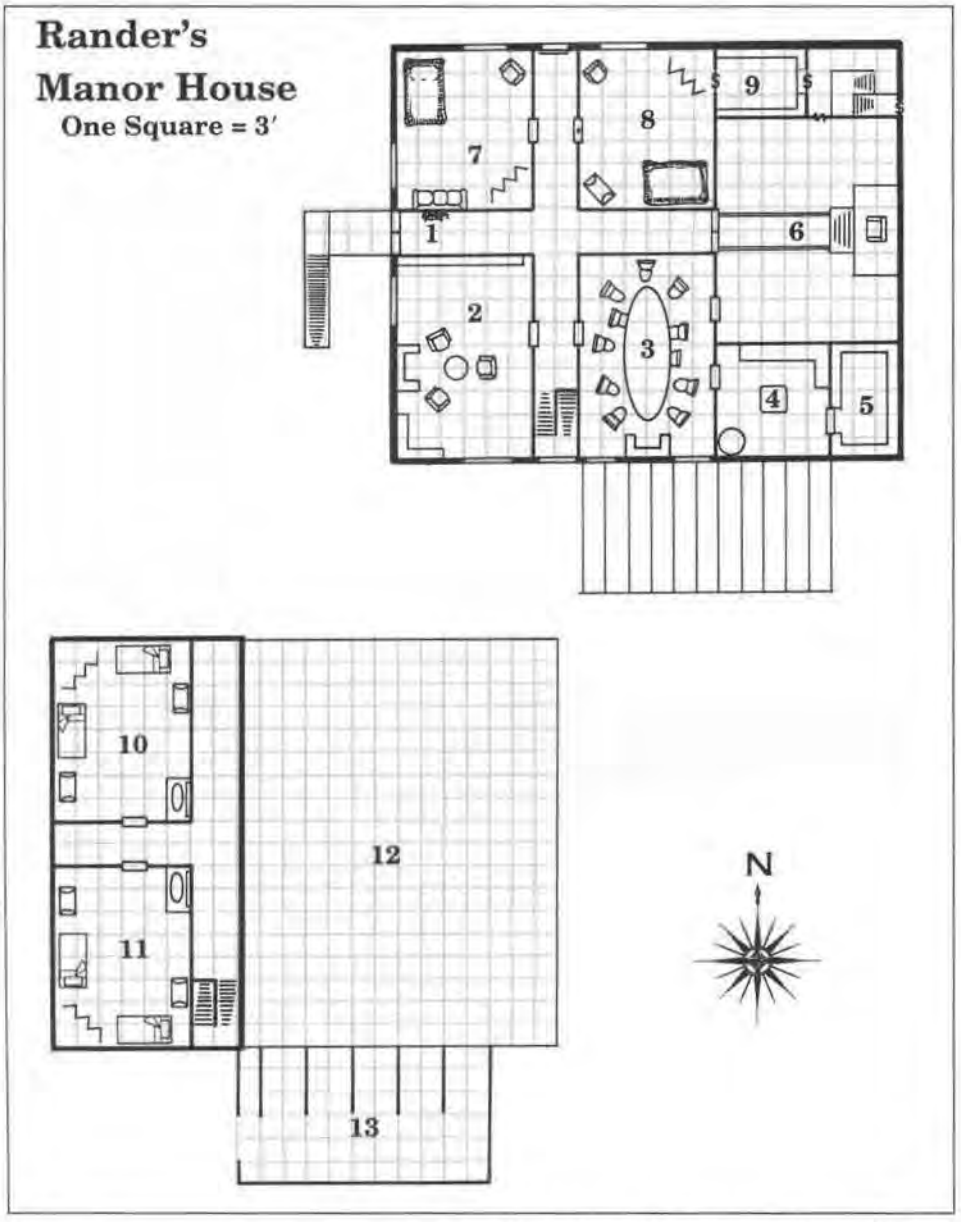
Any PCs desiring an audience with the king are directed to his castle, a modest little keep on the hill north of town. When they see fit to request an audience with the king, read or paraphrase the following:

At the gate to the castle, you are met by the King's Secretary, who politely asks you your business at the King's Court. After receiving your response and noting it in a colossal log book, the Secretary escorts you to the King's audience chamber. Along the way, you hear the sound of talk and quiet song floating down the hallways from somewhere deeper in the castle.

You soon reach the end of the hallway at a huge set of double doors. The secretary opens them with a flourish, gesturing for you to enter.

King Cobbisham sits fast asleep in his seat, snoring loudly. His secretary makes motions for you to rise, then sets about trying to rouse the king from his slumber. You slowly rise to your feet and survey the court.

Rich tapestries adorn the walls, and a burgundy carpet runs from the doors to the foot of the throne.



Beautiful stained-glass windows shine with multi-colored light behind the throne, and smoldering braziers give off a comfortable warmth.

King Cobbisham wakes with a start and looks around with bleary eyes. He quickly recovers, though, and becomes every bit the regal presence you had expected. After much harrumphing, the king leans forward and looks down at you with an imposing glare.

"What are your names?"

Once the PCs have introduced themselves, King Cobbisham asks them for their story. The charges of extortion, assault, and murder, especially when brought against one of the King's Representatives, are not light matters. Cobbisham takes them very seriously. Unless the PCs present a solid case against Rander, Cobbisham agrees to "look into it further," but he actually does nothing more. To admit publicly that one of his own officers has been terrorizing the populace and extorting money from them is extremely embarrassing and politically damaging for him. He will not take steps against the tax collector if he has any doubts about the charges.

The King of Cobbish is, however, a fair and just man. He won't let fear of public embarrassment keep him from doing what is right. If the PCs convince him that injustices have been committed against his subjects, his wrath against Rander is great indeed.

King Cobbisham: AL LG; AC 8; MV 12; 0-level human; hp 9; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 9, D 11, C 14, I 15, W 17, Ch 15; ML 16; *dagger +1, ring of protection +2, ring of invisibility.*

A kingdom as small as Cobbish doesn't have the finances to support a large army. In fact, most of the policing is done by a rotating volunteer militia. For this reason, the king is hesitant to commit troops to apprehending Rander. Considering what a capital job the PCs have done so far, Cobbisham makes the only decision he deems prudent: he deputizes the PCs and charges them with arresting Rander.

After several minutes of quiet deliberation, King Cobbisham looks down appraisingly.

"We have come to a decision. We have no knights available to commit to this pursuit, yet it is clear something must be done. Such depravity and immorality will not be tolerated in our domain, least of all by one whose arm is an extension of our own. This man must be brought to justice, both to put an end to his crimes and to serve as an example to all who would rob and assault our citizens.

"To this end, we pronounce you all King's Deputies and charge you with arresting and returning to this court, *alive*, the criminal known as Rander. As our deputies, you wield the authority of the throne and must bear the same responsibility. Any abuses of this authority will be severely punished; however, you also have at your disposal the full resources of the kingdom. Go now, and return quickly. Each day that you delay, a villain walks free in the Kingdom of Cobbish."

Any reasonable request for equipment is met by the King's Secretary. Whether they ask or not, the PCs are supplied with a set of shackles for Rander and one light war horse from the King's stable for each PC. Needless to say, the horses are of the finest quality and the shackles of the strongest

iron. The PCs are also given scarlet cloaks, the mark of the King's Deputies in Cobbish.

This is a serious task, not to be undertaken frivolously. The Scarlet Cloak is a symbol of justice in the Kingdom of Cobbish. When wearing it, the PCs are expected to act accordingly. Abuses of power tarnish the reputation of throne and are not tolerated.

Learning where the renegade tax collector lives is no trouble. Either the King's Secretary or any inhabitant of Lowick can give the PCs directions.

Confronting Rander

Like all bullies, Rander is a coward at heart. Money and power are nice, but what he values above all else is his own skin. His villainy has earned him a great deal of cash, but it has also made him paranoid, since he must stay one step ahead of the law.

To assuage his fears, Rander has taken steps to ensure that he is well protected. First, he spent some of his blood money on a heavily fortified manor house far from civilization. It is a huge stone house, complete with iron window shutters and stout doors. The only visible access is up a stair and across a small drawbridge, guarded at all times. There is also a secret door out the back, but only Rander knows of it.

When Rander decided that the manor wasn't enough protection, he went one step further. Now Davrick, one of the hired thugs, sits sentry in the bushes a few hundred feet up Rander's private road, alert for any signs of trouble. If he thinks something is amiss, he rides with all possible haste back to Rander's manor to give warning.

What takes place at the manor house depends on whether the PCs have come straight from Lowick or if they have already been deputized. If they have not been to the King's Court, their encounter with Rander should be brief. The guard on the road lets them pass, but the guard at the door refuses them entry, insisting that they require an appointment. If the PCs ask for an appointment, the guard tells him that Rander is booked. Always.

If the PCs arrive from the king on fine horses and wearing the scarlet cloaks, Davrick leaps on his horse and gallops back toward the manor house, sounding his horn all the way. Rander's goons aren't known for finesse or subtlety. Davrick remains true to form, riding straight up the middle of the road rather than taking the more stealthy forest route.

Davrick: AL CN; AC 8; MV 12; F2; hp 16; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 14, D 9, C 8, I 13, W 11, Ch 13; ML 10; XP 35; long sword, light crossbow, leather armor.

If the PCs give chase and apprehend the mercenary before he gets too far, their job will be much easier. If they do not pursue him or are unable to catch up, he reaches the house and tries to hold the stairway while Crabbin, the door guard, winches up the drawbridge. If this happens, the PCs must do some quick thinking to avoid being shut out behind an iron-bound gate.

Crabbin is a rough, uncouth man, but he is strong and a good fighter. It takes him 10 rounds to raise the drawbridge by himself. On their horses, barring any distractions, it takes the PCs five rounds to reach the house from their first encounter with Davrick; however, they must deal with the mercenary before they can do anything about the door.

While all this is happening, Rander doesn't just sit back and relax. The instant Davrick's horn begins to sound, Rander springs from his resting place in the library and peers out the window. Seeing that the cause of alarm is a group of scarlet-cloaked King's Deputies, he guesses correctly that his days of robbing Lowick are through. From there, he waddles to his bedroom. Calling his last two hirelings, Shaber and Trout, he orders them to guard his door and then barricades it from the inside. This is how things stand when the PCs enter the house.

Rander's Manor House

Rander's manor house is well-built and designed for defense. If put to direct attack, it could stave off anything less than a small army. The PCs' only hope of getting inside lies in swiftness, not in strength of arms. The first floor of the building contains no windows; those on the second can be closed behind great iron shutters. Each level is 15′ high, so the distance from ground to window is about 18′. Breaking in through a window is out of the question, though, unless someone is able to scale the wall and lower a rope. This itself is no easy task. The entire house, from roof to foundation, is made of stone. It is built so well that nearly no foothold can be found. All PCs attempting to climb the wall suffer a –25% penalty to their Climb Walls rolls. All the doors of the house are of solid oak bound with iron.

The only entry into the manor house is via a stairway separated from the house by a 10′ span. A drawbridge from the door to the top of the stairway can be lowered from inside. Because of the narrowness of the drawbridge, only two people can cross and attack the guard at the door at one time.

Crabbin: AL NE; AC 7; MV 12; F3; hp 18; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +1; S 16, D 11, C 13, I 8, W 9, Ch 8; ML 8; XP 65; bastard sword, dagger, leather armor, shield.

Crabbin fights bravely to hold the drawbridge, but if he is badly injured, the throws down his sword and surrenders.

1. Main Hall.

> As you pass through the door into the house, you take a quick moment to glance around before deciding where to go. The hallway in which you stand is broad and well lit, with flagstone floors and tapestries on the walls. Farther down, two side passages lead off into the house, while the main hallway continues to a large pair of ornately-carved double doors. They stand tightly shut, but the flickering glow of candlelight washes out through the cracks.

2. Library/Study.

> This room is a pleasant, comfortable library. A fireplace is built into the wall opposite the door, and a small fire burns on the grate. Three stuffed armchairs surround a table in the center of the room, and suits of full plate armor decorate the corners to the left and right of the door. Bookshelves adorn the north wall and the southwest corner.

There is little that should be of interest to the PCs here. The tomes on the shelves are fairly low-brow, mainly adventure tales and picture books. Each is a large, leatherbound volume weighing 2d4 pounds.

If any PC gets it in his mind to claim a suit of armor, he is out of luck. The joints have all been welded together, and repair—requiring a talented armorer—would be almost as expensive as buying a whole new set of armor.

3. Dining Room.

A huge oak table dominates the center of this room. Around it are seven chairs, three on each side and one at the head. On the wall opposite the head of the table is a large stone fireplace, now dark and cold. The walls of the room are decorated with murals and tapestries, all well-wrought and pleasing to the eye. Two doors stand on the east wall, one on the west. Windows flank the fireplace.

There is nothing of importance to the PCs in this room. The tapestries are of fine quality and high value, though the PCs would have a hard time justifying taking goods bought with money extorted from the townsfolk. If necessary, the DM should assign a monetary value to these items in keeping with the economics of his campaign.

4. Kitchen.

A wide counter adorns the north wall of this room, and a fireplace with many hooks and rings for hanging pots sits in the southwest corner. In the center of the room is a large cutting block, and bits of meat and bread are scattered on its surface. There is a door in the opposite wall.

The inhabitants of the manor are not known for their tidy housekeeping. Nothing of special interest to the PCs appears here.

5. Pantry.

Shelves line all the walls of this room, leaving only a space for the door. The shelves are covered in an assortment of meats, cheeses, breads, onions, and other foodstuffs. The northeast corner is occupied by three large barrels labeled flour, salt, and wine. The last has been broached and sports a spigot, which drips intermittently into a cup set beneath.

The wine is an expensive but not very distinguished vintage. Unless the PCs are hungry, this room holds little of interest to them.

6. Audience Chamber.

This richly-appointed room seems to be an audience chamber or a court of some kind. The hardwood floor gleams impressively, and the walls glow with the colorful tapestries detailing grand battles and glorious adventures. Across from the door is a large platform on which rests a marble throne. The room is otherwise bare, except for a fine red carpet which runs from the doorway to the foot of the throne.

The title of King's Representative is an important one, but not one that calls for this kind of extravagance. This room and its trappings are here merely to gratify Rander's ego. The tapestries are valuable, but again the PCs should not steal these ill-gotten goods. If necessary, the DM should assign a value to these items.

In the north wall of the room is a secret door. It leads to Rander's secret escape route (see area 10).

7. Spare Bedroom.

You stand in a tastefully appointed, expensively furnished bedroom. Against the far wall stands a huge, mahogany, four-poster bed. In the corner to your right is a chair, and to your left stands a large changing partition. A couch sits against the wall on your left. The room looks like it hasn't been used in a while, but it is spotlessly clean.

This room is used only when Rander entertains guests at his home, an event which hasn't occurred for many months. There is nothing of interest or value to the PCs here.

8. Rander's Bedchamber. Posted outside the door to Rander's bedroom are his remaining two hirelings, Shaber and Trout. If anyone comes down the hall toward them, they leap forward to do battle. Like Crabbin, they engage the PCs courageously; but if they are hurt badly, they lay down their arms and surrender.

After defeating the guards, the PCs still must get past the door to the bedroom. It has been barred from the inside by Rander as a last-ditch attempt to delay the PCs. The door has 100 hp, but each strike with a bladed weapon other than an axe has a 10% chance of breaking the weapon. When the PCs have destroyed the door, read or paraphrase the following.

With a final crash, the door breaks asunder. You leap through the broken frame, weapons drawn and ready for battle. But taking a look around, you find the room empty!

You pause a moment to gather your wits and examine the room. In the corner to your left sits a chair flanked by a small table, and to your right is a large chest. The rest of the room is taken up by a large, canopied bed in the far left corner and a changing partition to the right. In the north wall a window stands open, its curtains flapping gently in the breeze.

The chest in the southwest corner contains nothing but clothes, fine but obviously tailored for a very overweight man. Buried underneath the clothes is a dagger in a jewelled scabbard, attached to a fine leather belt. Its value is 50 gp, if sold to the right buyer. The rest of the clothes are worth about 20 gp total.

The open window is a decoy; Rander escaped to his treasure room.

9. Treasure Room.

Meager light from a single torch illuminates this small room. The north, south, and east walls are lined with shelves. Gold and jewelry glitters from small bins and cubbyholes set in them, and a few coins and gems are spilled upon the floor. Several rich tapestries and canvasses stand rolled in the northeast corner. Save for the fabulous riches before you, the chamber is empty.

The grand wealth spread upon the shelves is free for the taking; however, the coin and gems no more rightfully belong to the PCs than they did to Rander. This is blood money, and it has only one proper home: in the hands of those from whom it was taken. If the PCs do not come to this conclusion on their own, then perhaps they are not such heroes after all.

Should the PCs opt to steal some of the treasure here, the DM should determine the value of the jewelry, tapestries, and paintings.

10. Davrick and Trout's Bedchamber.

> Unlike what you've seen of the rest of this house, this room is unkempt, unlit, and shabbily furnished. With the light coming in through the door, you can see beds lying against the north and west walls, as well as a changing screen in the corner between them. A medium-sized chest lies next to each bed, and a washstand and basin sit in the corner to your right.
>
> Soiled clothes lie about the chamber, and the pieces of a dirty shaving set are spread over the washstand.

These are the quarters of Davrick and Trout. Neither is a particularly clean man, as is seen here. The footlockers contain nothing but more dirty clothes.

11. Crabbin and Shaber's Bedchamber.

> For mercenaries' quarters, these are surprisingly well kept. The washbasin is clean, and both beds are made. Other furniture includes two chests and a changing screen.

The chest against the east wall contains nothing but clothes. In the one on the west wall, however, is secreted a small pouch of coins worth 25 gp total.

12. Stable. This shed built onto the house is used for stabling the horses of Rander and his hirelings. At the time of the conflict, only four mounts are here; one is being used by the road guard.

This is where Rander's greed proves to be his undoing. Rather than escaping quickly down the hidden stair, retrieving a horse from the stable, and making good his escape, Rander has dallied in the treasure room, trying to fit as much gold and jewelry into his pockets as he possibly can. Once the PCs finally manage to make their way into his bedchamber, however, he realizes that time is indeed short, and he makes his way outside. His goal is to sneak out to the stable, take a horse, and escape down the road.

Any PC listening carefully can hear the sound of a heavy door heaving-to; the PCs can trace this noise to an area of the wall behind the screen in Rander's bedchamber.

Whenever the PCs finally do catch up to Rander, be it on the stairwell or 10 leagues down the road, the final confrontation ensues. Of course, Rander uses any and all tricks at his disposal to delay the moment of his capture as long as possible, if not forever. If caught, he tries to worm his way out of the arrest by verbal trickery. In short, he knows he doesn't stand a chance in a fight, and he uses his craftiness to avoid arrest.

Rander: AL LE; AC 10; MV 10; 0-level human; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 6, D 11, C 7, I 14, W 17, Ch 9; ML 4; dagger, 125 gp in coin and jewels.

Rander has no scruples or morals whatever. When role-playing the villain, the DM should keep in mind his high wisdom, which Rander employs to manipulate and trick the PCs. He quickly seeks to identify the least intelligent among the PCs, then tries to threaten and cajole that PC into releasing him.

Rander knows what will likely become of him if he is brought before the king, and he wants desperately to avoid a permanent stay in the dungeon. However, even that is better than being killed outright, and he knows it. If any of the PCs seems to be losing his patience with Rander's deceptions and seems prone to violence, Rander immediately ceases his charade and becomes totally compliant.

The real challenge in this encounter is taking Rander alive. When he is

SideTreks

Afraid of the dark?

BY PETER SPAHN

Artwork by John Dollar

"Cloaked in Fear" is an AD&D® game SideTrek adventure for a mixed, good-aligned party of 3–5 characters of 3rd–5th level (about 18 levels total). The party is assumed to have arrived in Hargast, a small town of about 1,000, but any rural community with a small cemetery can be substituted. This adventure can be played as a one-night session or dropped into nearly any existing campaign. Since the cause of every cemetery disturbance is often some type of undead, PCs who go into the cemetery loaded with garlic, silver, and cold wrought iron are in for a surprise.

Adventure Background

The town of Hargast has recently been plagued by a series of grisly murders. No one is safe. For the past two months, the remains of both humans and animals have been found, their bones picked clean and left to dry in the morning sunlight.

Recently, strange sounds and dark shapes have been seen moving through the cemetery on the edge of town. These disturbances occur only after sunset. Undead are strongly suspected, and the townsfolk have taken to barricading themselves in their homes at night, lining their doors and windows with garlic, silver, holy water, and any other protective charms they can get their hands on. The PCs can see evidence of this protection upon first entering the town.

Although undead are suspected, the truth is far worse. The townsfolk are being preyed upon by a cloaker named Tzisactsren.

Tzisactsren (cloaker): INT high; AL CN; AC 3 (1); MV 1, fly 15 (D); HD 6; hp 41; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1–6 (×2) + special; SA moaning; SD shadow-shifting; SZ L; XP 1,400; *MM*/44.

For reasons unfathomable to human minds, the cloaker's fellows drove it from its homeland far beneath the earth. By chance it happened upon a tunnel that led to the surface world and emerged a little more than a mile from town.

Famished from its long journey, the cloaker immediately enveloped and devoured a sleeping cow in a nearby pasture. Its appetite sated, it began searching for a place to rest undisturbed while it digested its meal. The cemetery, located on the edge of town and rarely visited by anyone save the caretaker, was ideally suited to its needs.

Tzisactsren has decided to remain in the area for a while. It enjoys toying with humans (who scare easily) before it kills them. Tzisactsren must feed at least once a week, and its favorite tactic is to slither into someone's home (via a chimney or basement). Once inside, it uses its moaning ability to force its victim into a trance, then envelopes and devours the unfortunate person, leaving behind nothing but bones.

Few townsfolk brave the cemetery at night. Those that did and were lucky enough to return were fooled into believing that ghosts walk the cemetery by cunning use of Tzisactsren's shadow-shifting ability. Only Golin, the cemetery's aging caretaker, has glimpsed the cloaker's true form, and the sight has driven him mad. Tzisactsren knows the old man has seen it, but it amuses the cloaker to let the man live with his mounting fear and madness.

CLOAKED IN FEAR

Beginning the Adventure

If the PCs remain in Hargast longer than a week without investigating the cemetery, there is another murder. By coincidence, Tzisactsren kills and devours an NPC townsman that the PCs have befriended (i.e. town militia man, barkeeper, serving girl, etc.). If the PCs still ignore the problem, the mayor of Hargast personally asks them to eliminate this threat. The townsfolk are not wealthy, but they offer the party the deed to a small cottage and two acres of riverside property just outside of town, or free room and board anytime they return to Hargast. If the PCs volunteer for the job on their own, the mayor still offers them the same deal.

The Cemetery

The cemetery is surrounded by an 8' tall rusty, wrought iron fence that is overgrown with creeper vines. Only one gate leads into or out of the cemetery. Green grass blankets the ground inside the cemetery everywhere except on the dirt paths that meander through the entire complex. The cemetery contains a few vine-covered stone crypts and many grave markers of wood and stone.

At night the place is deathly quiet except for the wind and odd squeaking and scratching sounds. Fine mist covers the ground, and an occasional group of rats scurries across the paths. Perceptive party members have the distinct feeling of being watched.

Since Tzisactsren is nocturnal, this adventure should be played at night. If the players insist on entering the cemetery during daylight hours, Tzisactsren can be found in the crypt marked **#1**. Tzisactsren hates the sunlight and conceals itself in the darkest corner of the chamber.

If the PCs make noise while entering the crypt, Tzisactsren is aware of their presence but remains hidden. It uses shadow-shifting to darken the shadows around it if the PCs enter its lair.

If the PCs begin a thorough search of its hiding place, Tzisactsren attacks, gaining a +2 to its surprise bonus as it leaps from the enveloping shadows. It moans first, trying to cause *fear* in the group before attempting to envelope an individual using its shadow-shifting ability to better its AC. In this case, Tzisactsren fights to the death.

Combat in the crypt is difficult due to the confined space, so PCs cannot effectively wield large slashing or bludgeoning weapons. In addition, slashing or bludgeoning weapons of medium size suffer a –2 attack penalty. Piercing weapons are unaffected.

If the PCs approach the cemetery at night, the cloaker is in its element. When not out hunting, Tzisactsren usually spends the night roaming the cemetery grounds. It is instantly aware of any intruders who try to enter the cemetery after dark.

Tzisactsren attempts to discourage intruders by using its shadow-shifting ability on the gate or area of fence that the party is entering. As Tzisactsren emits a low-pitched moan, it makes the bars and vines appear to drip dark blood. The moaning does not have any game effect on the PCs, although it may make them feel uneasy.

If the party persists, Tzisactsren twists the shadows around them as they enter the cemetery, making it look as if gravestones are beginning to lean slightly toward the party. It also makes the earth in front of some of the grave markers appear to churn.

During the PCs' search of the cemetery, Tzisactsren is constantly on the move, trying to weaken or separate the party by using a combination of its moaning and shadow-shifting abilities. It uses the mist and its natural abilities to camouflage itself as it stalks the party. If Tzisactsren can manage to separate a lone PC from the rest of the group, it attempts to envelope and kill him.

Roll 1d12 once every hour to determine what tactic Tzisactsren employs. With the exception of #2, 6, 7, and 12, all of the encounters listed below are illusions created by the cloaker's shadow-shifting ability. Each encounter occurs only once; re-roll duplicate results.

Roll 1d12

1. A low moan creeps through the deserted cemetery. This is Tzisactsren's moan. This encounter does not have any statistical effect on the PCs. Tzisactsren is just trying to spook them.

2. A short, hysterical burst of laughter echoes through the cemetery. This is Golin, the caretaker.

3. A ghostly, gray, hooded figure bearing a dark staff appears about 20' in front of the party. It ignores all questions. If approached or threatened, it slowly sinks into the ground.

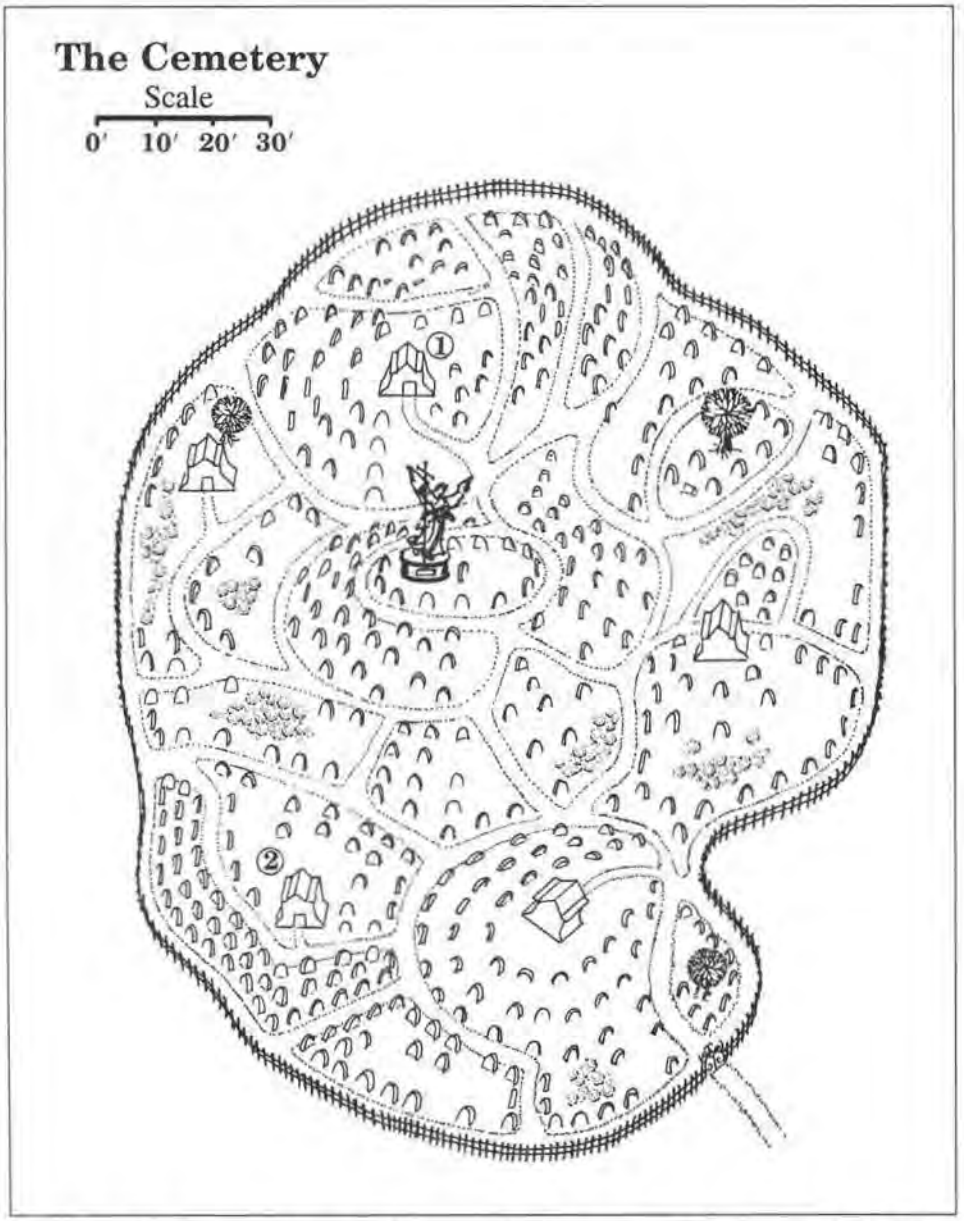
4. A random PC sees movement out of the corner of his eyes, but when he turns his head nothing is there.

5. A pack of about two dozen black rats cross the party's path about 20 yards ahead of the group. They stop suddenly. The two largest stand on their hind legs to observe the party for a few seconds before turning to face one another. It is hard to tell at this distance, but they appear to converse silently with each other. If approached or threatened in any way, the entire group scampers off in 24 different directions, disappearing into the mist.

6. Something small, dark, and winged flies overhead and disappears into the mists. This is a normal bat. If the PCs are specifically looking into the sky, they see this encounter several times throughout the night.

Bat, Common : INT animal, AL N; AC 8; MV 1, fly 24 (B); HD 1 hp; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SZ T; XP 15; *MM*/15.

7. A perceptive PC (chosen at random) hears a faint rustling sound and just barely catches a glimpse of a dark



form and what appear to be two glowing red eyes disappearing into the mist. (The PC has just glimpsed Tzisactsren slithering across the ground.)

8. The PCs see shadowy human-like forms flitting across the cemetery grounds, vanishing into the mist.

9. A ghostly gray skull suddenly appears floating about man-height in front of the party. The skull opens its mouth and as it does the cloaker uses its *fear*-causing moan to send the PCs into flight.

Keeping low to the ground and staying hidden as best as possible, it flies after fleeing PCs and attempts to envelope and attack a lone PC.

10. A single PC (chosen at random) sees a shadow-version of Tzisactsren's true face on a headstone. The cloaker grins at the character, then disappears before anyone else can see it.

11. A huge shadowy cloud of smoke coalesces out of the mist. A double-sized image of the cloaker's true face appears in its midst as it slowly billows through the air toward the party. Its mouth is open wide in a scream.

As this happens, Tzisactsren uses his *fear*-causing moan to separate the party. He then uses his nausea and weakness moan on any remaining PCs before flying after those who fled. Attacks on the cloud of smoke have no effect.

12. The PCs encounter Golin, the 68-year-old caretaker (0-level human; AL N; AC 10; hp 2; #AT Nil; XP 15). When Golin glimpsed Tzisactsren's true face, the sight drove him insane. Golin now believes that he is a cloaker.

The party finds him sitting in front of a grave marker talking incoherently to himself. He is completely naked except for a tattered cloak hanging from his shoulders. When he first sees the party, Golin snarls and quickly clambers up the nearest headstone. He then flies (jumps) to the attack, moaning loudly and swatting PCs with a willow switch.

The party should be able to subdue the old man easily without hurting him. If captured, he struggles and demands to be let go. Unless the party can help with his madness, there is very little chance that they can learn anything useful from Golin's ravings.

If the PCs let him go, he flees through the cemetery to the crypt marked **#2**, climbing grave markers and "flying" off them. Once at the crypt, he enters a small chamber in the rear and crouches down behind the coffin, where he remains for the rest of the night.

If the party follows Golin to the crypt, this may provide them with a clue to the real cloaker's resting place. If the PCs engage in combat with Tzisactsren at night, the cloaker fights fiercely. It uses its moan first to cause *fear*, then nausea and weakness. It attacks any remaining unaffected PCs first, using its shadow-shifting ability to obscure the party's vision and improve its AC.

In this case, however, Tzisactsren does not fight to the death, attempting escape if reduced to 10 or fewer hit

points. It uses its shadow-shifting ability to create a wall of shadows between itself and the party, then slithers behind a crypt or grave marker. If the party gives chase, it misleads them with a shadow-image of itself fleeing deeper into the cemetery.

Concluding the Adventure

If the DM plays Tzisactsren correctly, the PCs should have a healthy respect for cloakers by the end of this adventure. PCs killed by the cloaker are not devoured until the party has left the cemetery, so there is a good chance that slain party members can be recovered.

If the party leaves the cemetery before killing the cloaker, Tzisactsren now considers them a threat and will eventually find them in town and attempt to slay them one by one as long as they remain in the area.

If the PCs defeat Tzisactsren, there are several possibilities for continuing the adventure. The tunnel that leads to the Underdark is the most obvious. Other subterranean monsters might discover it, causing the town no end of troubles. Dark elves or duergar might attempt to use the town as a base of operations for forays onto the surface world. Or the PCs might decide to launch their own expedition into the underworld. Kind PCs may even choose to find some way to cure poor old Golin of his madness.

Once the PCs rid the town of the menace, the mayor of Hargast gladly gives the PCs the land and cottage he promised, knowing full well the benefits of having experienced adventurers living so close to home. The PCs may not decide to settle down just yet, but it is always nice to have a place to fall back on for some rest and relaxation. Ω

first day, have them interrupt the corsairs (including some from the ship) celebrating in the Great Hall, while Achbar and Mahmud have dinner in Achbar's quarters. If they make their assault in the evening of the second day, they could end up in a position to listen in as Achbar discovers Samia's identity (this could then turn into a race to see who gets to her first). An assault on the evening of the third day should coincide neatly with Kamal's arrival after being carried here by Emambo. Ultimately, the decision is up to you.

Keep in mind that if the PCs take on Achbar in melee, some of them will almost certainly end up dead, withered, or enslaved. The preferred method to battle Achbar is to let the kada kill him—but this can be done only if the PCs have a way to keep the kada's sand dry. One method is to use the *veil of desert dryness* by draping it over the sand before the kada makes its attack. Emambo could also do it, even from inside the jewel, by using *produce fire*—if the PCs can get hold of the jewel rose. Even then, they must release him (against his will) or bargain with him. The poetic end for the jewel rose would be that the transforming liquid from Achbar's laboratory be poured over it, turning it into a real rose and releasing Emambo. Arabian purists might make the rose "indestructible" by ordinary means, leaving this transformation as the only solution.

If the PCs rescue Samia, they earn a story award of 5,000 XP. Furthermore, they have Kamal's lasting gratitude, as well as Omar's (if he survived). Of course, this does not mean that Samia will actually consent to marry her dull Ganese merchant—having had a taste of adventure, she might head into the desert for more!

If Emambo ends up a free genie (even though he did not consider himself imprisoned at the time) through the PCs' actions, a further award of 2,500 XP is appropriate. An especially kindhearted DM might leave Emambo owing a service to the PCs. If the PCs bring about the circumstances in which the kada can kill Achbar, they should be awarded either Achbar's XP value or the kada's, depending on how much trouble they had in doing it.

All the goods that were in the original caravan should be returned to their owners, together with the appropriate number of camels, but anything else is the PCs' to keep. Out of gratitude, the merchants are more than willing to leave the PCs with any coins the corsairs may have appropriated (and which are now doubtless mingled with the various treasures the PCs have acquired).

If the PCs want to keep Achbar's lair as a base of operations, it will bring them a number of problems. There is no ready source of food, and the location is remote. If the PCs entered Achbar's lair through the stream and killed the giant crocodile, the water of the stream will start to foul because of the decaying body in about 10 days (if they took over Achbar's lair and didn't feed it, this will happen after about three months). This in turn will cause the surrounding land to sicken. An adventure might be made out of solving this problem. Maybe the Column of Rising Waters and the Pillar of Falling Flames have a hidden purpose, known only to the genies, who wish to see this purpose fulfilled. Or perhaps the slave traders come looking to see what has happened to their once-reliable source of slaves.

Another possible follow-on adventure is a hunt for the corsairs' treasure buried in the Bahr al-Izdiham, the Crowded Sea. And if Achbar escaped, he is sure to return to plague the PCs again. Ω

finally run down and caught, he lashes about wildly with his dagger. Any PC coming within range is attacked. If Rander suffers even a single point of damage or is intimidated by the PCs, he quickly quiets down and becomes a model prisoner . . . that is, until any chance for escape appears.

Concluding the Adventure

When Rander is finally brought before the court of King Cobbisham, justice is swift and sure. He spends an uncomfortable night in a cold cell and is brought before the king at first light. After the PCs' report, he is quickly sentenced and sent off to spend the rest of his life in the dungeons of the king's castle. The king's audience chamber is packed for the occasion, and there is much cheering and rejoicing as Rander is hauled off to his fate.

Successful completion of this task has one large, lasting effect on the lives of the PCs: they are now regarded as folk heroes in the Kingdom of Cobbish. This is both a boon and a curse. The PCs should have little trouble finding free food and lodging with the peasants of the kingdom, but they must also live up to certain expectations that the citizens have of them.

In addition, King Cobbisham is also very grateful to the PCs for apprehending this villain. After Rander has been hauled away and the cheering has died down, he tells them that he has a special reward for them: each may keep the horse borrowed from the king's stables. This is a generous gift indeed, for the king's horses are known for being the finest in the land (consider them all high-spirited horses as noted on table 25 of the *DMG*).

In addition, if all the PCs conducted themselves in an honorable and noble manner (and have not stolen any of the goods from Rander's Manor), Cobbisham has one final way of thanking them: he offers them each a permanent place in the ranks of the King's Deputies, and all of the trappings that accompany such a position.

Finally, should the PCs ever visit the village of Lowick again, they are treated with the warmest welcome and greatest courtesy and maybe even a ballad chronicling their deeds, composed by Shepton the bard himself. Ω

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